

GOVERNMENT OF MADHYABHARAT



REPORT
OF THE
MINIMUM WAGES COMMITTEE
(AGRICULTURE)

सत्यमेव जयते

GOVERNMENT PRESS, INDORE
1954

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INTRODUCTION

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE

In exercise of the powers conferred under sub-section 1(a) of Section 5 of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Government of Madhya Bharat in the Development and Labour Department, by their Memorandum No. 1029/XIV/72/51 dated the 4th April 1952, appointed a Committee, "to hold enquiries about wage levels prevailing and other conditions of agricultural labour, and to make recommendations regarding the fixation of minimum rates of wages" in accordance with the terms of reference set out in paragraph 2 of this report. The Committee consisted of the following persons:—

(i) Shri K. R. Gawade, Commissioner, Southern Division.		<i>Chairman.</i>
(ii) Shri A. S. Banavalikar, Labour Commissioner, Madhya Bharat.		<i>Member.</i>
(iii) Shri Ramsingh Bhai Varma, President, I.N.T.U.C., Madhya Bharat.	} <i>Employees'</i> <i>representatives.</i>	<i>Member.</i>
(iv) Shri Kanhaiyalal Kotwal, Indore.		<i>Member</i>
(v) Shri Laxminarayanji, Mandasaur.	} <i>Employers'</i> <i>representatives.</i>	<i>Member</i>
(vi) Shri Ram Narayan Sharma, Gwalior.		<i>Member</i>

Dr. K. B. L. Bhargava, Economic and Statistical Intelligence Officer, Madhya Bharat, was asked to work as *Secretary* to the Committee.

2. The terms of reference as laid down in the Memorandum were as follows:

(i) to consider the report of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry received from the Ex-supervisor, Agricultural Labour Enquiry and to recommend in what areas minimum wages could be fixed and from what date after 31-12-1953;

(ii) to recommend the quanta or rates of wages which may be fixed, in a particular area and for a particular class of employees;

(iii) to recommend the class of agricultural employees who may be exempted from the operation of the Act in selected areas; and

(iv) to recommend what further ameliorative measures may be taken in the interest of agricultural workers in Madhya Bharat (e.g., the establishment of suitable subsidiary industries, training of agricultural workers etc.).

3. Owing to the indifferent health of the Secretary, the Committee could not commence its deliberations earlier than the 5th July 1952, when the first meeting was held for the discussion of preliminaries, and the procedure to be followed for the purposes of the enquiry was laid down. In the second meeting of the committee held on 19-9-1952 at Indore, it was decided that a supplementary questionnaire be issued to all the members of the State Assembly, Heads of Departments, Social Welfare organisations and registered trade unions, to elicit further information regarding conditions of agricultural labour and the special aspects of the rural problem of Madhya Bharat State, and in order to gain knowledge of the problem to visit selected villages. The circulation of the questionnaire which was issued both in Hindi and English was completed on 30-7-1953. A list of persons who took the trouble of replying to the questionnaire is given in Appendix I.

4. It need hardly be said that the views expressed by the members of the Assembly though few in number, were of great assistance to the Committee in reaching general conclusions not only on the question of wage rates, but the broader question of the economic life of the rural population on which such rates depended.

5. The third meeting of the Committee took place at Indore on 10-12-1952, when the replies received from various quarters were considered. On the 11th and 12th July 1952, the Committee visited the villages listed below for making personal enquiries in respect of socio-economic conditions and existing levels of wages or earnings of agricultural labourers

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Umariya | 14. Mandhwara |
| 2. Kodariya | 15. Talwada |
| 3. Palasia | 16. Dawana |
| 4. Jamli | 17. Kunwa |
| 5. Agra | 18. Lunera |
| 6. Mulkheda | 19. Pepalda |
| 7. Gokulpur | 20. Dharampuri |
| 8. Mendakwas | 21. Dewla |
| 9. Sujwani | 22. Rangoon |
| 10. Dhamodi | 23. Owlda |
| 11. Rehegun | 24. Jeerabad |
| 12. Dhaba Bawdi | 25. Keswi. |
| 13. Taloon | |

6. The fourth meeting of the Committee was held at Indore on the 25th May 1953, when conclusions on the terms of reference were reached. On that day, the Committee decided that it was necessary to examine the Development Commissioner, Director of Industries and Chief Conservator of Forests with special regard to term (iv) relating to the ameliorative measures to be taken in the interest of agricultural workers. The evidence of Deputy Development Commissioner (in the absence of Development Commissioner) and Chief Conservator of Forests was recorded on the 27th May 1953 and evidence of the Director of Industries on 29th May 1953.

7. Before stating in detail the conclusions reached by the Committee on the matters referred to them for consideration, it would be desirable to deal briefly with the nature of the problems implicit in the fixation of minimum rates of wages for agricultural workers, the economic back-ground of the State's agriculture and the various directions in which reform appears to be necessary, before the minimum rates of wages are fixed and for their maintenance after such fixation takes place.

BACKGROUND OF MINIMUM WAGE LEGISLATION

8. At the end of the last War the attention of the Government of India was drawn to the extent of sweating that took place in certain employments for the assessment of which they appointed the Labour Investigation Committee which reported on a large number of employments in which sweating of labour occurred. It is mainly due to the labours of this Committee that the Minimum Wages Act was passed in the year 1948, under which the appropriate Government is required to fix minimum rates of wages for about 12 employments and in agriculture under Part II of the Schedule to that Act.

9. By virtue of the Part 'B' State (Laws) Act, 1951, this Central measure of enactment was extended, in its application, to the State of Madhya Bharat

with effect from 1-4-1951. The Act provides for the fixation of minimum rates of wages and for their periodical revision at fixed intervals by appointing committees and advisory bodies and it makes provisions, for the enforcement of rates statutorily fixed by providing for a machinery. The Act contemplates that the minimum rates of wages framed under that Act should vary with the cost of living index numbers even though the exact method by which the rates are to be fixed is not mentioned. It will be remembered that the scope of the Act is so wide as to bring an employer employing at least one person under it, so that if the whole Act were rigorously enforced it would be possible to bring every employee under all the 12 employments, unless the total number of employees in any employment is less than 1000. Part II of the schedule covers the whole of agriculture including farm cultivation and tillage of soil, dairy products and horticulture, raising live stock, bees and poultry and any practice performed by a farmer on the farm in connection with farming operation including forestry or timbering or marketing, delivery and storage of their products under the law. Under Section 3, there is a proviso which enables the appropriate Government to fix minimum rates of wages only for a part of the State or for any class or classes of such employment, while Section 26 of the Act empowers the appropriate Government to grant exemption and exception and Section 27 allows a State Government to add to the schedule.

10. From the information made available to us by the Labour Department, it appears that the State Government have notified draft rates of wages in few employments under Public Motor Transport, Stone breaking or Stone crushing; Road construction or in Building operations; rice mill; flour or dal mill; and in oil mills.

11. It is, however, clear that the question of the fixation of minimum rates of wages for employments covered under Part I of the Schedule is far different from the fixation of similar wage rates in respect of agriculture, as the conditions in agriculture itself are bound to vary not only from one State to another but from district to district, and they depend on a number of factors over which no official authority can exercise sufficient control as could be done in respect of smaller employments.

12. It is a keenly felt desire of most and probably the anxiety of the State Government that just as it is feasible to determine fair or minimum rates of wages for employees in large scale manufacturing industries or industries of the medium or small-sized factory type, it may be proper to attempt something on similar lines in the domain of agriculture, *inter alia*, on the ground that the existing rates of wages which are often customary and largely contractual are low as compared to what may be termed as subsistence rates of wages.

13. The employment position relating to agricultural workers has been correctly described in the November 1952 issue of the Bombay Labour Gazette from which the following 3 paragraphs are reproduced as the description applies fully to this State.

"According to the report the requirements of the farmer for assistance on his land determine the principal classes of agricultural workers. In the first instance, the farmer, especially if his holdings are large, requires some permanent help, always at hand, to assist him in undertaking the various agricultural operations which are continually in progress. This help should be available on the spot at all odd hours. In addition to this assistance, the farmer is

usually in need of more help during the crop-preparing and growing seasons. He also requires every form of assistance when his crops are ready to be harvested; he then looks round eagerly for extra workers and is inclined to accept all who offer themselves for such work.

The employment of the various kinds of farm labour, viz., permanent, seasonal and purely temporary or casual, thus arises out of the exigencies of the work to be done on the farm. Permanent help, available at all times, is secured through the engagement of workers whose contract of employment runs for a period of time, whose presence near at hand is ensured by the assignment of lodging or accommodation, and whose goodwill is, as a rule secured by the maintenance of many customary and traditional arrangements for their own benefit and that of their dependents.

Custom, in fact, governs an untold number of daily acts and usages in agriculture and every-where constitutes an indispensable guide in the relation between the different groups of agricultural population. It creates and preserves from generation to generation a characteristic stability in the structure of agricultural society. The immense diversity existing in different areas in respect of the nature of contract or agreement between the agricultural employer and the employee, the modes of payment of wages, perquisites and the traditional privileges enjoyed by the workers are all the outcome of age-long experience and though all these customs may not be beneficial, their significance has to be recognised in any scheme of agrarian reform."

14. In a monograph recently published by the International Labour Office on the Problems of Wage Policy in Asian Countries, the question of wage regulation has been carefully studied. While referring to the need for such a policy in the under-developed countries, the International Labour Office recommended a very slow and cautious approach because a number of economic factors are likely to come into play as soon as there is a statutory effort to regulate the minimum wage. After attempting to ascertain the effects of wage fixation on prices, production, employment, savings of the community and balance of payments, the monograph proceeds to observe that even though it is true that by comparison the wage rates of agricultural workers are lower than those of workers employed in large scale industries, cottage industries, handicrafts and plantations, they tend to be low, principally because of the low productivity of labour employed in agriculture, the surplus number of agricultural workers; the relative immobility of such labour, and lastly because a large majority of agricultural workers are basically unskilled. The monograph refers to the existence of unemployment and under-employment in the rural areas as one of the reasons that also tends to depress wage rates.

15. It is pointed out that if the rates of wages of workers of the unskilled type were raised above the average of what is being paid to them at present, it would not only affect the total volume of employment, but it may displace labour from medium and large farms where they at present happen to be employed. In the case of large scale farms it may open up possibilities for the use of agricultural machinery if it is relatively advantageous as compared to the employment of a given complement of unskilled workers.

16. As regards the benefits arising from the fixation of wages, the monograph concludes that if unskilled workers were given a wage higher than what they are earning in the natural course, a large number of self-employed would not be able to get the benefit of it, and since their earnings would be lower than those of workers covered by the agricultural minimum wage, there may

be a shift from self-employment to employment covered by the Minimum Wage Law which would ultimately bring about a reduction in the wages. Proceeding further, it is argued that if the wages of the unskilled workers were pushed up, its immediate effect would be an increase in the purchasing power of workers which would be spent principally on food and thus raise food prices, not only for the recipients of the minimum wage but for the self-employed and the community as a whole. This rise in the prices of food would, however, not stimulate agricultural production which depends on rains and similar factors. The monograph suggests that the essential problems allied with wage policy in the Asian countries are:—

- (i) the effective utilization of surplus labour,
- (ii) rapid spreading of improved technique requiring additional capital,
- (iii) careful selection of appropriate projects for capital investment,
- (iv) full use of imported resources, and
- (v) restriction of non-essential consumption and investment.

17. The conclusion drawn in the monograph being very important, is quoted below:

"It is not likely that a workable solution to this problem can be found in any near future. Many, perhaps, all of the countries concerned will for a long time find it all but impossible to establish a general minimum wage rate to be applied in all industries. This would not mean that the objective of ensuring to all workers about the same minimum standard of living would have to be abandoned, but the attainment of that objective would become the terminal rather than the starting point of a programme of general, social and economic development. Under such a programme the establishment of a general minimum standard of living for all wage-earners would rank as one of the objectives, for the attainment of which it would be the function of economic policy to create the necessary conditions".

18. In the view of the Committee, these are weighty reasons which must be carefully considered before fixing a general agricultural minimum wage, as a theoretical proposition. It would appear from the subsequent chapter why in the practical field there are insuperable difficulties which may militate against the implementation of the Act with regard to agriculture generally.

19. We have carefully scrutinised the data presented in the form of tables in the Report received from the Ex-Supervisor, Agriculture Labour Enquiry, under which 24 villages of the State with 2399 families were surveyed. The average population of these villages was 549 and the density per square mile 189, which conforms to the general pattern of Madhya Bharat which according to the 1951 census, had 19126 villages out of the 21967 villages with a population below 500, the number of villages with a population between 500-1000 being 2495. It is significant that according to the survey the working population of these villages was 52.5 per cent as compared to the most accepted percentage of 33 to 40, which is due to the fact that children below 15 years of age who were reported to be working for hire or reward were classified as workers.

20. The percentage of earners was highest in Zone III i.e. about 32 and lowest in Zone IV—18.2, whilst that of helpers was highest in Zone IV, which is somewhat peculiar because of its being an Adivasi area. Unless there was an error of misclassification of Earners and Helpers, the percentage of women earners was the lowest in Zone IV (0.05), whereas the percentage of women

helpers was highest (25.8 per cent), as compared to 1.46 per cent, in Zone II. It is clear that earners from the group of Boys and Girls hardly exceed 2 per cent in all the Zones. This shows that earners from Boys and Girls hardly ever touch 2 per cent whilst Helpers touch about 9.2 per cent in Zone IV and about 3 per cent in Zone II and III. This might indicate the need for the provision of educational facilities to children below 15 years of age unless the handicap of poverty would operate against their schooling. The percentage of literate boys for the State was 1.7, while that of literacy for the whole State 8.6. It was lowest among women at 0.6 per cent.

21. The percentage of dependents to the number of earners was highest in Zone I—56.68 per cent and lowest in Zone IV—33.8 per cent. It would be improper to draw any inference from these percentages of dependents, but it is not known whether the higher percentage would support a belief that the average expectation of life or the net birth rate was higher in Zone I as compared to Zone IV. The figures also indicate that hardly one per cent of the dependents were men; while the percentage of dependents who were women was about 11.9 for all the Zones as a whole. The percentage of women dependents in Zone IV was 0.6 as compared to 18.61 in Zone I and 10.04 in Zone II. The percentage of dependents from the group of boys and girls was even in all the Zones at about 18.

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

22. The occupational distribution of the villages surveyed indicated that landowners formed 39.7 per cent of the population; tenants 23.8 per cent and the agricultural workers 19.5 per cent. Only 17 per cent of the population were non-agriculturists i.e. they were either in business or were salaried employees. 83.4 per cent of the families depended on agriculture for their subsistence. On the basis of the figures offered by 1951 census, we have ventured to compute the total number of agricultural workers with and without land which in our view should not exceed 4.31 lakhs. It is peculiar that 19 of the 239 families or 7.9 per cent were agricultural families in Zone IV while the highest number of agricultural families was 203 out of 563 or 36.6 per cent in Zone II. The very low number of agricultural families is due to the fact that Zone IV is predominantly an Adivasi area and cultivation is carried on in that area, on the basis of joint ownership, where the tillers of land cluster together for their safety. It is not known whether this habit of clustering together in the Adivasi tribes would prove a helpful factor for their development on co-operative lines.

SIZE OF FAMILY

23. For the State as a whole, the average size of the family was highest in the case of tenants—5.86, as compared to 5.4 of the families of landowners. The average size of the family of agricultural workers was 4.62, that of workers without land being 4.36 as compared to that of workers with land being 5.06. The average size of the family of agricultural tenants was 6.40 in Zone IV and the lowest—5.25 in Zone III; that of agricultural land-owners was 6.10 in Zone IV and the lowest in Zone II, (5.03). It is not known whether agricultural tenants find a better sized family to be an economic proposition, as the problem of finding employment is not as serious to them as in the case of non-agricultural workers' families, the size of which for the State as a whole was 3.71. The figures confirm the impression that the average size for all agricultural families consisting of landowners, tenants and wage earners was 5.42 as compared to that of total non-agricultural workers' families the size of which was 4.39.

24. Among the agricultural workers themselves, it is interesting to compare the size of the family of a worker with land—6.13 in Zone IV with that of 3.75 of a worker without land in the same Zone, a trend which is shared by the size of a worker's family with land in Zone II—5.14 as compared to that of a worker without land 3.94. If landlessness has a healthy effect on the family size, it would be instructive to study the effect of a policy of redistribution of land may produce on the agricultural workers without land, and the birth rate in that group. Since 14.9 per cent of the total agricultural families covered by survey were those of workers without land, the percentage of landless workers, therefore, formed 10.4 per cent of the population surveyed while that of all workers being 16.3 per cent. According to the census of 1951, 10.6 per cent of the total population of this State represented persons occupationally distributed as cultivating labourers or agricultural workers.

INDIGENOUS POPULATION

25. The survey throws interesting light on one cross section of the village families of whom about 20.5 per cent families belong to tribal and aboriginal communities known as Mundas and Gonds. The Mundas included the Bhils, Korkus and Savaras, the first of which namely Bhils were confined to the Districts of Ratlam, Dhar and Jhabua, while the Gonds appeared in Nimar proper. Other backward classes formed 11.5 per cent of the total number of families surveyed, but the report is silent on their distribution in different zones. According to the 1951 census figures, 11.12 lacs of the population of Madhya Bharat were Adivasis and 13.24 lacs Harijans, a feature with which we have dealt with in the last term of our reference.

26. 46.5 per cent of the landowning families belong to scheduled castes, or tribes or aboriginal communities or to other backward classes. The percentage of tenant families from among them was 45.5. It is, therefore, not correct to assume that a large majority of the wage earning workers belong to the so called "depressed classes" and it is highly probable that the "upper-classes" also enjoy their relative share in land-lessness.

MORE EARNERS IN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS' FAMILIES

27. The average number of earners among the families of landowners was 1, among tenants a little more than 1 but among agricultural workers it was 2.27. This is compensated by the higher number of helpers per family of landowners which was 1.98 and of tenants 1.65 as compared to the workers which was 0.31. The table given below shows the position in a summarised form with regard to the number of earners, helpers and dependants in different agricultural families.

	Earners.	Helpers.	Dependents.	Total.
Owners	1.0	1.98	2.53	5.51
Tenants	1.01	1.65	3.18	5.84
Workers	2.27	0.31	1.91	4.49
Total Agricultural families	1.30	1.49	2.57	5.36
Non-agricultural families	1.37	0.24	2.06	3.67

The unit of working and helping force per family, therefore, remained almost constant in all the three classes of families being 2.98 in the case of land owning families, 2.66 in the case of tenants families and 2.58 in the case of wage earners. The low earning strength in Zone IV was presumably due to the large number of landholders' families where members other than the head of the family worked as unpaid helpers. Coming to dependants in the above families, their average number was 2.53 in case of land-owners and 3.18 in the case of

tenants. This point may be of considerable interest for a public authority, who instead of fixing the minimum wages on an average family basis might decide a basic rate per earner and grant dependent's allowance to unskilled workers because in the present case the employer of labour would stand to gain in the shape of dependent's allowance what they are prone to lose as employers of labour.

28. From the table relating to the percentage distribution of families according to their size and the number of earners the most frequent group was that of families with a single earner; there being as many as 1,883 or 78.6 per cent of the families out of 2,396 total families surveyed. 48.5 per cent of such single-earner families had a size of family consisting of less than 5 persons, while 12.6 per cent of the families had 2 earners. But in the case of families of agricultural workers only 18 per cent had a single earner, 46.5 per cent had 2 earners and 20.8 per cent had 3 earners. The most average size of the families consisted of single or two earners. The size of the family of agricultural worker for the State as a whole was 4.52 as compared to the size of all agricultural families put together which is 5.32, the relative earning strength of the former being 2.39 and for latter 1.26.

MORE WOMEN THAN MEN DEPEND ON AGRICULTURE

29. As regards the main occupations of earners the statistics furnished by the Survey indicate that 80.72 per cent pursued agriculture as their principal source of livelihood whilst the remaining followed non-agricultural professions. 70.55 per cent of these total male agricultural earners were holders of land and 29.45 per cent were mainly dependents upon agricultural labour. Of the total male non-agricultural workers, the figures show that a little less than two-thirds did business or were salaried employees. About 85 per cent of the female earners were agricultural workers, which is a point of interest in determining the wages of female workers where they are low as compared to those of men in mixed occupations. The figures reveal that very few earners from the land-owning families followed any other avocation.

SUBSIDIARY OCCUPATIONS OF EARNERS

30. 737 out of 985 land owning earners had no subsidiary occupation. 1947 of the 2,617 agricultural earners had no ostensible subsidiary occupation, but only a very small minority of agricultural workers as distinct from tenants and owners did other non-agricultural work. But a larger percentage than this from among the earners of the families of land-owners and tenants appear to take to non-agricultural work. The peasants who supplemented their earnings during the slack season depended on carpentry, carting, collection of forest products etc. In Zone III, however, dairy farming and sale of ghee meant additional income to some workers and in Zone IV spinning and weaving appeared to provide gainful employment. Rope and basket making provided an occupation for the members of the backward castes, as did poultry farming to the Muslims.

31. About 5 per cent of the landowners who had uneconomic holdings either leased them on rent or took to agricultural labour with a view to supplement their earnings. But 10 per cent of them took to domestic or salaried employment in addition to their principal calling. The percentage of tenants who performed agricultural labour as a subsidiary occupation was 6.87 as compared to 12.78 of earners who followed non-agricultural occupations. 22 per cent of agricultural workers had some subsidiary occupation or the other, but very few or 6.65 per cent took to cultivation as a subsidiary occupation. 15.65 per cent

of the total agricultural workers took to trades other than agriculture, but conversely a majority of non-agricultural workers resorted to cultivation or agricultural labour.

32. It is clear that in all the four Zones there is almost a complete absence of subsidiary occupations for the agricultural worker, and occupations connected with agricultural labour appeared to be a more important source of employment during the slack season as compared to work unconnected with agriculture. This unhappy position is enough to indicate why it is imperative to develop sources of subsidiary livelihood as the first step in the direction of creating those conditions which must precede the fixation of a minimum wage in agriculture or for sustaining the rates when they are built up. This may suggest that if the wages in agriculture are to be raised above their present level, immediate effect would only be to reduce the demand for labour of agricultural workers, as there would develop a tendency to dispense with the services of hired labour and make use of the available helpers in the family or dependents.

SIZE OF HOLDINGS

33. According to the survey, the average size of the holding was 12.70 acres, and they were distributed as follows:—

3 per cent of the holdings were below 1 acre.

51.8 per cent of the holdings were between 1-10 acres.

34.4 per cent of the holdings were above 10 upto 25 acres.

The cumulative frequencies of holdings indicate that the average size of 97 per cent of the holdings surveyed was 8.93. 52.77 per cent of the holdings surveyed were occupied by landowners' families, the average size of such holdings being about 16 acres. 30.52 per cent of the holdings were held by tenants. Less than half of these were below 5 acres, about one fourth between 5 to 10 acres and the balance between 10 to 25 acres. The area of total holdings occupied by tenants was about 24 per cent of the total or a little over one third of the area occupied by landowners. The average size of tenants' holdings was about 10 acres.

34. The families of agricultural workers had 9.65 per cent of the total holdings or 6.7 per cent of the total area. Less than half of these were below 5 acres and less than one-fourth between 5 to 10 acres and more than one-fourth between 10 to 25 acres. 6.9 per cent of the total holdings and 3.01 per cent of the total area was held by non-agricultural families, their average size being about 5.48 acres.

DISTRIBUTION OF CULTIVATORS' HOLDINGS ACCORDING TO CATEGORY OF FAMILIES

	Total No. of hold- ings	Area of the total holdings	Average size of holding
Agricultural Owners	828	13,239.35	5.99
Agricultural Tenants	479	4,760.45	9.94
Agricultural Workers	153	1,331.91	8.71
Non-Agriculturists	109	595.97	5.48
Total	1,569	19,928.68	12.70
			Average size of holding for the State

35. The figures of distribution of holdings compiled by the survey official as shown in the earlier table indicate that the average size of the holdings of agricultural owners was 16 acres, as compared to 10 acres of agricultural tenants, 9 of agricultural workers and 5 of non-agriculturists. The holdings of owners were principally concentrated in the size of 10 to 25 acres, while those of tenants were concentrated on the size of 2.5 to 5 acres and 1 to 2.5 acres. No family of agricultural worker had any holdings in excess of 100 acres, there being only one case where he had a holding of about 97 acres; Eight of them had holdings of the size of 25-50 acres, the average size of holdings being 33.4 acres. The biggest concentration of workers' holdings was in the group of 10 to 25 acres the average size of holdings being 15.1 acres.

36. None of the non-agriculturists had a holding of 50 acres or above, the highest concentration of such holdings being between 1 to 5 acres. Their average size of holdings was 2.1 acres. The table given below shows the percentage of holdings held by owners, tenants and agricultural workers according to their sizes:—

TABLE SHOWING THE PERCENTAGE NUMBER OF HOLDINGS
HELD BY OWNERS, TENANTS AND AGRICULTURAL
WORKERS ACCORDING TO THEIR SIZES:

Frequency distribution of size of holdings	Agricultural Owners		Agricultural Tenants		Agricultural Workers		Non-Agriculturists		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Below 5 Acres.	126	8.03	218	13.25	73	4.65	69	4.39	486	30.32
5 & below 10 Acres	197	12.55	123	7.83	34	2.16	21	1.33	375	23.87
10 & „ 25 „	380	24.21	107	6.81	37	2.35	16	1.01	540	34.38
25 & „ 50 „	96	6.11	20	0.12	8	0.50	3	0.19	127	6.92
50 & „ 100 „	28	1.78	8	0.50	1	0.06	...	...	37	2.34
100 & Above	1	0.06	3	0.19	...	...	...	...	4	0.25
Total	52.74		28.70		9.72		6.92		98.08	

Note:—Percentages of holdings given in the Report involve some error (.6 Per cent).

37. As the figures indicate the frequency distribution of holdings covered by the survey it may be worth while analysing them in greater detail. A little more than one-third of all the holdings irrespective of the rights of those cultivating them were concentrated in the group of 10-25 acres, while about one-fourth each were in the group of 2.5 to 5 acres and 5 to 7.5 acres respectively. One-tenth of these holdings had a size of 1 to 2.5 acres and 7.5 acres to 10 acres, while less than one-tenth were of the size of 25 to 50 acres. It is significant that hardly any holding was in excess of 100 acres, those between 50 to 100 acres being only 2 per cent of the total and those below 1 acre being 3 per cent of the total.

38. From the point of view of acreage, 42 per cent of the total acreage lay in holdings of 10-25, 21.1 per cent in holdings of 25 to 50 acres and 12.8 per cent

in the size of 50-100 acres. Only 3.3 per cent of the total acreage arose from holdings of 100 acres or above, whilst the acreage of holdings below 2.5 acres in size was almost negligible. The acreage of holdings of 2.5 to 5 acres, 5 to 7.5 acres and 7.9 to 10 acres accounted for about 19 per cent of the total acreage. The above figures give an impression that in the area covered by the survey, the problem of uneconomic holdings is not as serious unless, the process of fragmentation had been resorted to for the convenience of the individual members of the Hindu Undivided Family.

39. Though it would not be very safe to draw general conclusions applicable to the whole of the State from the above statistical analysis of holdings, they are sufficient to indicate that the pressure of population on our land and agriculture is not as severe as it is in the rest of India, nor does it offer practical evidence of the process of fragmentation having been carried to the extreme. Since 70 per cent of the total area was owned by families residing in the villages, it appears that the problem of absentee landlordism was not difficult of solution. But obviously such a phenomenon is bound to curtail the demand for agricultural labour in respect of land owned by families where they reside in the villages themselves. There is, however, wide variation from zone to zone e.g. in zone I about 61 per cent of the total area was rented while in zone IV it was only 3.77 per cent. Similarly it appears that three-fifth of the total area under the possession of agricultural workers was owned by them, while in respect of the balance he had probably some sort of tenancy rights.

PERSONS PER HOLDING

40. Though the surveyors have not produced detailed figures indicating the average number of persons, as distinct from families, supported by holding, in different size groups, they observe that the average number of persons per holding for the State as a whole was 5.7. While the average number of persons dependent on the holding below 1 acre is stated to be 4.27, this average increased with the size of the holding, for example as the size increased from 5.2 to 5.5 upto 6.2 when the holdings were above 10 acres. The average number of *attached* workers is revealed to be the highest for a farm of the size of 50-100 acres, which indicates both the need and capacity of bigger landholders to maintain permanent farm labour. It is, however, regretted that the survey does not indicate the number of men so maintained by large farms and their propensity to do so as the size of farm changes. Whereas the size of an average holdings was 7.13 acres in zone I, it was double this in zone IV (14.91 acres) a little over this i.e. 16.19 acres in Zone II, the highest size being 26.83 acres in Zone II i.e. about twice that of the holdings in Zones II and III combined, and about four times that of holdings in Zone I. It is not known whether these variations in the sizes of average holdings could lead to practical conclusions regarding the size of the optimum holding, since there is no data regarding their relative fertility and irrigational facilities.

CROPS, LIVESTOCK AND IMPLEMENTS

41. The surveyors having omitted to deal with the importance of commercial and food crops separately in each of the zones in relation to employment, wages and value, it is not possible to draw any conclusions regarding the causes of the varying degrees of poverty of each region. The information relating to livestock and implements merely confirms the age-old impression of a general nature that agricultural landholders of small means have a paucity of livestock and implements and, therefore, of any means of earning a supplementary income.

It would have been worthwhile if the survey had attempted to assess the incidence and extent of indebtedness of the rural communities, and particularly of agricultural workers.

RURAL HOUSING

42. The survey reveals that 81 per cent of the houses were *Katcha* while 8.5 per cent of the *Pucca* houses were owned by landowners, the balance being partly *Katcha* and partly *Pucca*. The houses described as *Katcha* had mud walls, *Kutch*a floor with thatched roof and were poorly ventilated. The agricultural workers, however, appear to reside in huts which also stabled their cattle. Only 7.3 per cent of the families lived in rented houses which were generally congested. The average number of inmates of the houses of an agricultural worker was 4.8. The number of persons per room in the agricultural worker's house being 3.2 as compared to 2.4 in the overall average. A large majority of the agricultural families including agricultural workers' families lived in one-roomed tenements, which might probably suggest that scope for further thinking in this direction exists. The average number of persons per room in which agricultural workers lived was highest in Zone IV, 4.07, 3.4 in Zone I, 3.2 in Zone II and 2.9 in Zone III.

HOURS OF WORK IN AGRICULTURE

43. The average hours of work with the correlated rates of wages paid in cash and in kind in 1938-39 and 1949-50 for men and women employed as casual workers, and for different types of agricultural operations give the following broad indications.

44. In ploughing, harrowing, manuring, weeding and irrigating, the hours of work were almost 8, but they were in excess of 9 in sowing. The increase in wages paid in cash probably allowed for a negligible increase in hours of work which has taken place between the two sets of years viz. 1938-39 and 1949-50. Whereas for ploughing, embanking, harrowing and sowing, cash wages with perquisites were paid, the hours of work have either dropped by a small margin or they have remained constant and extend roughly from 10 to 10.5 hours. In manuring, however, they have dropped from 9.7 to 9 hours, the wages having been increased from Annas three and pies eight to Rs. 1-8-0. We are not, however, prepared to attach any accuracy to the hours of work related to these wage rates and would make a safe assumption that they include short rest intervals which in agriculture are not observed by the clock.

45. With regard to wages in kind without perquisites, the hours of work also appear to be somewhat in excess of 9, there being a noticeable increase between the two sets of years. The hours of work for occupations where wages were paid in kind with perquisites, were in excess of 10 sometimes extending upto 11. In the absence of figures of wages paid in kind with perquisites for ploughing, embanking, harrowing, manuring, sowing and irrigating, it appears that this mode of hiring labour with perquisites has fallen in disuse, during the last decade or so. There is no marked difference in the hours of work for women, except that in transplanting they were below 8 hours where the wages were paid in cash without perquisites. In the year 1949-50 no women were being hired on cash wages with perquisites, even though it was found that they were employed in manuring in 1938-39. Where wages were paid in kind without perquisites, they worked for shorter hours than men, whereas with perquisites no women were entertained in any operation except in manuring, where the hours of work extended to 10. In Nimar District, it is stated that

there was no practice of paying wages in cash or kind with perquisites; both to men and women.

46. Had the survey included figures of employment of men and women generally for all agricultural occupations, if not for individual operations, it would have been interesting to find how the gradual increase in wage rates of men and women have reacted on their total employment or otherwise.

47. From the table on page 15 it would appear that in those operations where cash wages without perquisites were being paid, women worked in all occupations except in ploughing in most Zones, but no women appear to be employed on cash wages with perquisites in the State. The hours of work of women where cash wages without perquisites were being paid appear to be higher than those of men in embanking and irrigation only. But they were lower in manuring, sowing, transplanting, weeding, harrowing and threshing. They were low by about 2.6 hours per day particularly in harrowing, which probably explains the considerable disparity in the cash wages paid which were about $2\frac{1}{2}$ times as low as compared to those of men. There is, however, no evidence of their being paid substantially lower wages than men, where they were employed for less hours than men, or higher hours of work than those of men or of discrimination against women by payment of low rates. It appears almost certain that the productivity of women in men's occupations being lower they are paid correspondingly less, and in this respect there does not appear to be specific need for protection of their wages or hours of work. In operations where cash wages with perquisites were paid, no female labour was at all employed in ploughing, embanking, harrowing, manuring, sowing, irrigating and threshing. But this mode of payment also does not appear to be in vogue in transplanting, weeding and harrowing.

48. The hours of work of men employed on cash wages with perquisites appear to be uniformly higher than those of men employed on cash wage without perquisites, but it is not known from the data collected as to whether the difference in the two sets of hours included the rest interval. In all probability, it does not, because the value of perquisites itself is so substantial that the total value of wages paid to men in all these operations is considerably higher than the corresponding rates of cash wages without perquisites. If it were otherwise, cash wages with perquisites would prove to be definitely uneconomic as in certain operations. For example in embanking, manuring, sowing, the latter rates of wages were 50 per cent more while some were higher by more than 100 and 150 per cent. It is believed that payment of cash wages with perquisites enables the employer to obtain intensification of labour and there seems little effort towards restricting the working hours.

49. The data relating to wages in kind for the State as a whole indicates that no women were being employed in ploughing, embanking and irrigating, but they shared in all other men's operations. The hours of work of men paid in kind, were generally higher in all operations as compared to those of men drawing only cash wages, while those of women were substantially lower in harrowing and manuring where they were 6 and the same in weeding and harvesting and only higher in threshing.

50. It is interesting to note that a ploughman who worked for 8.6 hours on a cash wage of annas 0-12-0 per day worked for 9.9 hours where he was paid in kind without perquisites at annas 0-12-5 daily. In embanking, he worked for 9.6 hours on wages in kind whereas as a cash wage earner he worked for 7.9 hours daily and got almost the same. In harrowing, a man worked for

wages in kind for 9.4 hours as compared to a horrow-man drawing cash wages who worked for 8.6 hours and such instances could be multiplied. In threshing, however, he worked less and drew a higher wage when he was paid in kind, there being no difference in the wages drawn by men and women in this and harvesting for comparable hours of work.

51. Where women were paid in kind they earned about the same wages for the same hours of work in harrowing, while in manuring they received a greater benefit of reduced hours of work when paid in kind. The wages of a woman sower were less in kind, while she worked an hour harder; but in transplanting she worked less and got more as wages in kind. In weeding, both hours of work and wages were higher when she was paid in kind as in harvesting, but in threshing where she worked slightly longer hours she derived a proportionately higher advantage. The table therefore, represents very broadly that both in respect of men and women, paid in kind without perquisites the hours of work are neither unduly high nor are the wage rates low as compared to cash wages. Strictly speaking, reverse is the case, as the practice of paying wages in kind with perquisites seems to have fallen in disuse.

52. For Nimar District, of which separate Zone-wise data is available, wages were being paid in cash and kind, but without perquisites, and therefore no complication is introduced in that case. Here again, it is clear that women work for lower hours than men particularly in harrowing, manuring and threshing, and for the same hours as men in harrowing, transplanting and sowing. Where they work for lower hours than men, the wage rates in cash appear to be unduly depressed.

53. In harrowing, for example, a woman worked for 6 hours and earned annas five as compared to a man who worked for 8.3 hours and earned annas twelve, or in manuring where a woman working for 6 hours got five annas as against a man who worked for 8.5 hours and earned annas 0-11-6. It is not known whether the disparity, at least in these two operations would call for protective action in respect of female labour, as it would be impossible to suggest their being paid the same wages as men, if the reason for the lower rates is lower productivity or their supply being bountiful and immobile. If prima facie, there is a case for determining a minimum wage rate for women, its enforcement might present a difficulty by driving them from employment.

54. In this district, where wages were paid in kind, there is clear proof of longer hours of work only in ploughing, embanking, manuring and sowing and relatively low wage rates. A sower drawing cash wages worked for 9.5 hours and got annas 0-14-3 per day, but in kind he worked for 11 hours and got only annas thirteen and so did a woman in sowing who earned annas eleven in kind for 11 hours work, while in cash she drew the same for 9.5 hours. In threshing, however, the rates of wages paid in kind were twice as high for both men and women as compared to the wage rates in cash for slightly reduced hours. It is understood that these rates of wages are the result of an acute shortage of labour for performing these seasonal and short lived operations at one time all over the place and this is one of the few occupations in which the demand for labour pegs the wages at a high level.

55. To summarise, therefore, the most frequent method of wage payment to casual workers was in cash without perquisites, the next in importance being payment in kind without perquisites. Wages were not paid partly in cash and partly in kind, and perquisites were given only rarely.

56. Piece wages were prevalent for ploughing, embanking, weeding and harvesting. Ploughing, was generally paid for at the rate of Rs. 5/- per bigha and the worker was required to bring his own bullocks. In embanking, the rate was about Rs. 2/- per 100 sq. ft., for weeding, it was customary to pay a specific amount for a whole field, the amount being such that each worker earned from annas eight to annas 10 per day. The same practice obtained in harvesting Jowar. The rate for harvesting sugarcane was annas two for 100 stems. The average daily earnings of workers on this basis were Rs. 1-4-0.

57. The average number of hours worked by men and women and rate of daily wages paid to them in cash with perquisites and without perquisites in different agricultural operations in the year 1949-50 are given in the following table.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED AND RATE OF WAGES IN CASH AND KIND WITHOUT PERQUISITES FOR VARIOUS TYPES PAID FOR DIFFERENT AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS IN NIMAR DISTRICT (1949-1950).

Agricultural operations	Cash			Kind	
		Hours Worked	Cash Wages	Hours Worked	Value of Wages
Ploughing	Men	8.2	-/11/9-	Men	9.5 -/11/9
	Women	...	...	Women	...
Embanking	Men	9.0	-/12/-	Men	10.0 1/-/-
	Women	...	...	Women	...
Harrowing	Men	8.3	-/12/-	Men	9.0 -/11/9
	Women	6.0	-/ 5/-	Women	6.0 -/ 4/-
Manuring	Men	8.5	-/11/6	Men	9.0 -/11/9
	Women	6.0	-/ 5/-	Women	6.0 -/ 4/6
Sowing	Men	9.5	-/14/3	Men	11.0 -/13/-
	Women	9.5	-/11/-	Women	11.0 -/11/-
Transplanting	Men	8.0	-/12/-	Men	...
	Women	8.0	-/9/ 6-	Women	...
Weeding	Men	8.7	-/10/-	Men	10.0 -/11-
	Women	8.2	-/ 7/9	Women	10.0 -/ 9/9
Irrigating	Men	...	...	Men	...
	Women	...	...	Women	...
Harvesting	Men	9.0	1/ 1/6	Men	9.3 1/ 2/4
	Women	9.0	-/15/6	Women	9.3 1/ 0/8
Threshing	Men	9.0	-/14/6	Men	9.3 1/15/-
	Women	8.0	-/13/6	Women	9.3 1/13/8

ATTACHED WORKERS

58. Our analysis of wage rates and hours of work in the preceding paragraph had covered only casual workers, who form the large bulk of farm labour employed in agriculture for specific operations on time or piece rates of wages. The survey also deals with "attached" workers who were employed only in about 14 out of the 24 villages. The difference in the conditions of employment of these two separate categories of workers could be briefly described as follows:—

59. "Attached" workers were under a contract of employment usually for a whole year, but some of them were employed for 6 months. It was customary to get such agreements of employment executed in writing whenever they obtained any loans or advances from the employer against future wages. The wages were, however, disbursed at a fixed monthly rate, with or without perquisites. The method of payment and the specific conditions of service and wage rates generally varied from village to village.

60. In Zone I, "attached" workers usually received Rs. 15/- per month or grain of corresponding value. They were also given two daily meals valued at annas five, and other perquisites such as a pair of shoes worth Rs. 6/-, a turban worth Rs. 2/8/-, and a Doria of Rs. 6/-. These were supplied once during the contract of employment. The total cash value of wages inclusive of perquisites roughly came to Rs. 28/4/3 per month. In addition, the workers got some tobacco from the employer for smoking or chewing during working hours. It was found that women and children were not employed as "attached" workers in the villages surveyed in this Zone.

61. In Zone II, the cash value of the annual remuneration ranged from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 250/-. In most villages in this Zone, it was customary to give a substantial part of the wages in advance at the beginning of the agricultural year and to effect an adjustment thereof subsequently when wages were earned. In some villages, whenever loans were advanced, they were adjusted by giving work at the following rates to the members of the family of the workmen:—

- (a) Rs. 10/- p.m. for an adult male for watching the field at night for a period of two months;
- (b) Rs. 5/- p.m. for a woman for cutting grass;
- (c) Rs. 1/8/- p.m. to a female worker for cutting 1000 pindis or bundles of grass;
- (d) Rs. 4/- p.m. for a child for grazing cattle.

62. It thus appeared that the whole family of the worker was made responsible for the repayment of the loans, which sometimes carried a rate of interest as high as 20 per cent per annum. In many cases, however, no interest at all was charged. Where the wage rates were determined half-yearly, as in some villages it was customary to give 3 maunds of wheat and 6 maunds of Jowar valued at Rs. 48/- and Rs. 60 respectively. In these villages, the monthly rate of wages was about Rs. 20/-, the perquisites given being of the same kind as referred to in Zone I, but no perquisites were allowed if the monthly payment in cash or kind exceeded Rs. 20/-. In one village known as "Nawadpura", in addition to two daily meals valued at Rs. 5/- p.m., workers were paid either Rs. 10/- in cash or 10 Chowkis or 40 seers of maize.

63. Some workers were allowed to share a fixed portion of the produce from the employers' field and also received a cash advance at the beginning of the

year. If the worker brought his own bullocks, he was allowed half share in the produce, in addition, otherwise, he received one-third of the produce. In this Zone, children employed as graziers received Rs. 4/- per month or 4 Chowkis or 16 seers of maize in addition to the two meals daily.

64. In Zone III the annual payment varied from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 250/- in two villages and in one from Rs. 150/- to Rs. 200/-. No perquisites were being given, except a meal on important festival days. In some cases a light breakfast valued at annas two was supplied to the workers.

65. In Zone IV some workers were engaged on 'Padji' system, according to which the head of the family lent services of one of its members to an employer who provides free residential accommodation for the workers. They were given free meals valued at annas five per day and a pair of Dhoties and a turban and loin cloth of the aggregate value of Rs. 16/8/-. In this Zone, women and children were employed as "attached" workers and paid on the same basis. Children, however, received fewer clothes and cheaper meals.

66. The table given below summarises the position with regard to other attached workers in this Zone.

Period of employment.	Wages (in kind)	Cash value of meals.	Perquisites.
MEN			
Six months	3 mds. of grain	Two meals daily	A. pair of shoes,
	Cash value Rs. 30/-	Cash value - annas five a day.	Rs. 5/-,
			one dhoti, Rs. 5/-,
			one turban, Rs. 6/-,
			one loin cloth annas eight.
Total Rs. 102/12/- for six months.			
WOMEN			
Six months	2½ mds. of grain	Two daily meals	one dhoti Rs. 5/-
	Cash value Rs. 25/-	Cash Value annas three a day.	one ghagra Rs. 8/-
Total Rs. 71/12/- for six months.			
CHILDREN			
Six months	2 mds. of grain	Two meals daily	A pair of shoes
	Cash Value Rs. 20/-	Cash Value annas three a day.	Rs. 3/-,
			one dhoti Rs. 3/-,
			one loin cloth annas eight.
Total Rs. 60/4/0 for six months.			

Table showing the average number of hours worked by men and women employed as casual workers in different agricultural operations and wages paid to them in *Cash with perquisites* and *without perquisites* during the year 1949-50 in the State.

Agricultural operation		Without perquisites			With perquisites				Excess
		Hours worked	Cash wage		Hours worked	Cash wage	Value of perquisites	Total Value of wages	
1 Ploughing	Men	8-6	-/12/-		10-0	-/12/-	-/5/-	1 1/3/-	
2 Embanking	Men	7-9	-/12/-		10-5	1/4/-	-/4/-	1/8/-	
	Women	9-0	-/10/3		...	...	...	...
3 Harrowing	Men	8-6	-/12/5		10-2	1/5/9	-/5/-9	1/5/6	
	Women	6-0	-/5/-		...	...	...	...
4 Manuring	Men	8-5	-/11/9		9-0	1/-/-	-/8/-	1/8/-	
	Women	8-0	-/9/-		...	...	...	...
5 Sowing	Men	9-3	-/13/8		10-3	-/13/4	-/5/-	1/2/4	
	Women	8-0	-/11/3		...	...	...	...
6 Transplanting	Men	7-6	-/10/11		...	...	...	...
	Women	7-4	-/8/9		...	...	...	...
7 Weeding	Men	8-3	-/9/8		...	...	...	...
	Women	8-0	-/8/8		...	...	...	...
8 Irrigating	Men	8-5	-/7/11		9-0	-/15/-	-/4/9	1/3/9	
	Women	8-8	-/9/2		...	...	...	...
9 Harvesting	Men	9-5	1/-/6		...	...	...	...
	Women	9-4	-/14/5		...	...	...	...
10 Threshing	Men	8-9	-/12/4		10-0	1/-/-	-/8/-	1/8/-	
	Women	8-4	-/10/6		...	...	...	...

67. Having considered the Report of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry we are brought to the second part of the first term of reference which requires us to recommend "in what possible areas minimum rates of wages could be fixed before 31-12-1953".

68. Our analysis of the conditions of life and labour attempted earlier does not provide sufficient grounds to say that in the State as a whole agricultural workers are in need of the protective benefits of a minimum wage legislation. The survey shows that only a small per cent of the total agricultural population consists of workers with or without land as compared to other States,* and one of the principal reasons for their comparatively low wages is the low productivity of agriculture which is mainly the result of small subsistence farming and excess in the supply of labour which has almost a perennial source. From the survey it is established that the wages paid in agriculture are low and they are undisputably so, but throughout the survey there is no allegation made by agricultural workers of delays in the payment of wages or of non-payment of wages or an avoidance to pay wages when due. No complaints have been made from any quarter that the wages paid were subjected to illegal deductions, or that one of the principal reasons for the low rates of wages was the exploitation of easily available labour by the employers. If the wages of women workers are low in men's occupations, the reason is not the willingness or capacity of the employer to exploit female labour, but the abundance of that labour which almost amounts to a superfluity. These are general grounds which do not make it necessary that minimum rates of wages should be framed for agricultural labour for the State as a whole, and there is no proved case for building up such rates on the existing frame work of our rural economy at least for the present. In this context, it would be refreshing to study the views of the Planning Commission in their final report.

69. Realising that the existence of large numbers of agricultural workers who lack sustained employment as a source of serious weakness and instability in the present agrarian system, the Planning Commission analyse the factors responsible for the growth of agricultural workers, namely, the decline in rural industries and the increase in fragmentation and sub-division of holdings due to tenancy legislation. They felt that the problem of agricultural workers is, "in a larger measure one of unemployment rather than of under-employment, but the degree of unemployment depends almost entirely on the character of total agriculture and on the distance from urban areas". It is significant that the Commission felt that this was merely a problem of employment or unemployment rather than one of wages as such.

70. To them this was a part of the broader problem of improving agricultural economy as a whole, as the economic condition of the agricultural worker

*State.	Percentage of agricultural workers to the total agricultural population.
Travancore-Cochin	37
Bhopal	31
Madras	28
Madhya Pradesh	27
Bihar	25
Hyderabad	25
West Bengal	21
Madhya Bharat	15
Uttar Pradesh	8

depends upon "the state of prosperity in the agricultural economy". This was the main consideration which prompted the Planning Commission to make proposals for the reorganisation of the rural economy on co-operative lines, which they hope "will rapidly place the agricultural worker in a position of equality in status and opportunity with other sections of the village community". Since the welfare of the agricultural worker was an essential component of the development of agricultural economy, they believed that any measure of a general nature intended to develop the agricultural economy would also benefit the agricultural worker. In the mind of the Planning Commission there was some hesitation in considering the feasibility of fixing a general minimum wage for agricultural workers, since agriculture as an industry is inefficient and cannot offer continuous work even to the agricultural producer. The following three specific measures suggested by the Commission which have a direct bearing on the welfare of agricultural workers therefore represent a compromise with the statutory liability of the State Government to implement the law for the time being, and a precondition which must precede such a venture.

- (i) Selection of the areas having relatively high population pressure, where agricultural workers loom large, for the purposes of special programmes like Community Development Projects for the rehabilitation of agricultural worker.
- (ii) Schemes of welfare of Scheduled Castes and backward classes would benefit the agricultural worker where they mostly belong to them.
- (iii) Fixation of minimum wage rates for agricultural workers in low wage pockets, for the larger farms and an area selected for intensive development.

71. In dealing with the reorganisation of agriculture, the Planning Commission in their Draft Outline had made a basic suggestion for land reform, with a view to increasing production and making cultivation more profitable by reducing the unit costs and increasing yields which would have the effect of reducing the number of workers particularly engaged in the ordinary operations of farming. In discussing the possible lines of action to bring about a substantial increase in the size of the unit management, they considered that the nationalisation of the present rights of holders of existing holdings with a view to offer inducements to small farmers to become members of cooperative farming societies. One of the important suggestions made in this regard, is the setting up of the "registered farms". This suggestion, however, does not seem to have been expanded in their final report.

72. Our analysis of the average size of the holdings in the four Zones does not indicate that there is sufficient scope for the development of such farms, unless a large number of land holders and tenants get together for this specific purpose. But this may create exactly the opposite effect and reduce the demand for agricultural labour. While there is considerable scope for the promotion of cooperative farming societies as a method of agricultural reform in the State, any progress in this direction is not likely to better the lot of the agricultural worker himself.

73. With regard to the betterment of the lot of the agricultural worker the Commission considered that there was a strong justification for effecting, as early as may be possible, radical changes in this direction in the rural economy. They observed that because "agriculture as an industry is inefficient, and cannot offer continuous work even to the agricultural producer," in the present conditions a scope for improving the conditions of the agricultural worker

is very small." As an interim proposal, however, they make recommendations in their draft report in four directions, which the Commission called a selective approach, which may achieve in a large part the purpose of universal enforcement of Minimum Agricultural Wages throughout the State. In this connection, it would be interesting to remember that the State Government have already decided to fix minimum rates of wages for the rural areas for employment connected with road construction, building operations and stone breaking and stone crushing which are also bound to influence the rates of agricultural wages in those areas where they are low.

(1) Enforcement of the Minimum Wages Act in the first instance, in those areas in which the level of the rural wages is found to be relatively low on account of the presence of certain "exploitative" factors.

(2) Prescribing the minimum wages for workers engaged in farming above a certain size broadly fixed for the registered farms. It seems that this suggestion has been accepted by the Government of U.P. in fixing the rates of agricultural workers.

In the view of the Commission, the level of wages on such farms would influence wages in the surrounding areas. Even otherwise, the State-wide enforcement of minimum rates of wages for agricultural labour appeared to be administratively, a colossal task which was at present beyond the capacity of the machinery at the disposal of the Government and may reduce the volume of rural employment to the immediate detriment of agricultural workers.

(3) Settlement on all newly reclaimed land of cooperative societies of landless workers. It is not known how the Planning Commission hoped to provide the initial capital to these cooperatives of the landless workers, but the final report contains a concrete suggestion of the method of financing such cooperatives of landless workers in the following manner:—

"State Governments would formulate schemes for granting financial assistance to cooperative groups of landless workers for such purposes as house building, purchase of bullocks and implements and for ancillary industries which they may wish to take up after suitable training under the auspices of Government. Special assistance by way of educational stipends and for vocational and technical training, should also be offered, as indeed is already being done in many States".

74. Before any suggestions in this regard are made it would be necessary to hold consultations with the Development, Agriculture and Finance Departments and we are therefore not in a position to express our views on this topic.

75. The last recommendation made in the draft outline relates to the adoption of progressive social welfare policy, designed to improve the living conditions and social status of the agricultural labourer himself, such as, allotment of residential sites, supply of drinking water, etc. In their final report the Planning Commission have suggested the following ameliorative measures:—

(1) Expansion of cultivation; particularly intensive and improvement of agricultural practices.

(2) The promotion of village industries and Khadi.

(3) Location of community development projects in those areas where population pressure is greater with a view to rehabilitation of agricultural workers.

(4) Utilisation of a part of the amount provided in the Plan for the amelioration of the backward classes and scheduled tribes a large number of whom are agricultural workers.

(5) Resettlement schemes for landless agricultural workers for which separate financial provision in the Plan exists.

(6) Provision of housing sites in the villages to agricultural workers and conferring occupancy rights on them.

(7) Full support to the Bhoodan movement by providing means of cultivation and other assistance to landless workers selected for the allotment of the gifted land.

(8) Setting up of labour cooperatives for specific pieces of construction works as in the State of Bombay where the Forest Labourers' Society has succeeded.

(9) Supply of assistance by way of educational stipends and stipends for vocational and technical training.

76. It would thus appear that the Planning Commission felt inclined to defer the general question of the fixation of a minimum wage for agricultural workers on a State-wide or universal basis for some time to come and accepted the need for following measures for the development of the rural economy on a sounder basis than at present.

77. Even as an ameliorative measure calculated to raise the standard of living of the rural community, the fixation of minimum wage in respect of agricultural workers does not appear to be feasible under the existing conditions. Supposing that the rates of agricultural workers, a large majority of whom are unskilled were raised above the existing average of general wages, the effect such raising of wages would produce on prices, production, employment, and saving would have to be carefully studied, so as to ensure that the step does not negative the benefit it intends to confer on the workers themselves, and that it does not prove detrimental to an infinitely large number of consumers of agricultural products in the rural and urban areas alike.

78. It is common knowledge that if the wages of agricultural labour were increased they would be mostly spent on food as, an agricultural family is known to spend about 81 per cent. of their income on articles of food. The effect of this spending would be to raise the prices of food, not only for the families of agricultural workers but also those of land-owners and tenants, who have as shown in the survey more dependents in their families than the number of earners. This step would also raise the cost of living of a large number of self-employed in the rural areas and salaried persons who would not benefit from the minimum wages.

79. It is also possible that some of the self-employed whose annual incomes are not substantially higher than those of agricultural workers, would find it to their advantage to leave their present employment, and join as agricultural workers since they would stand to benefit by an increase in their incomes. This obviously would aggravate the existing problem of agricultural unemployment and swell the ranks of those who offer themselves for agricultural service, the long term effect of which would be to depress the rates of farm wages.

80. It is also interesting to consider whether the Central and State Governments who are committed to a policy of reducing the cost of living generally and prices—principally of food grains, would at all find it expedient to adopt a

general measure of reform in wages, which would in result undermine the efforts already made in the direction of reducing the living costs all round by bringing down the prices of pulses, cereals and other commercial crops such as oil-seeds, cotton and sugar-cane in some of which our export trade has to be stimulated.

81. The effect of such a measure of wage reform on agricultural production would depend on a number of conditions, and cannot therefore be exactly predicted. If as anticipated above, the expenditure from increased wages raises food prices, it is not known whether this increase in the price of food would bring about an expansion in the total cultivation of food crops and/or commercial crops or of increase in one and fall in another, since it is agreed that agriculture in this country is carried on, on the basis of subsistence farming and is not price responsive. It is, however, difficult to expect any increase in the total production of food, as a result of the rising of food prices even though it is true that it will generally make workman more efficient than he was before.

82. It is needless to mention that if as a result of the wage increase, cultivation does not become more intensive, in all probability the cost of cultivation would go up, and its effect on costs, particularly of those farms, where agricultural labour is employed on hire, would bring about a reduction in the margin of cultivation and may even make cultivation uneconomic on certain farms. Its effect on employment of agricultural labour is, however, bound to be adverse in those areas, where unemployment and under-employment is almost chronic and alternative sources of employment or for subsidiary employment do not exist. If the higher rates of wages lead to intensification of labour it would react unfavourably on the total volume of employment. As previously observed, the demand for agricultural labour principally arises from large or medium sized farms of owners and tenants, and any increase in the wages of agricultural workers may offer the owners of farm an added incentive to make use of the service of the helpers and dependents from their own families or press agricultural machinery in use if that proves more economical.

83. With regard to the savings of the community in general, and of that sector which can be described to be the saving classes in the rural areas, the measure would reduce the margin available for saving, because of an increase in the family expenditure on food and the increased costs of cultivation. This reduction in the availability of savings or capital would, in the long run prove unhelpful for the development of agriculture as a whole.

84. It is not known whether the effect of this increase in wages would give some relief to agricultural workers who are known to be considerably indebted. If the agricultural worker reacts by increasing his expenditure on food and other articles of consumption, it is difficult to expect him to divert a small part of his increased income to meet his old debts. In any case, it is impossible to conceive that the net increase in wages would be available for redeeming the dead-weight of old debts which have been incurred for financing consumption expenditure in the main.

85. It would, therefore, appear that the fixation of an agricultural minimum wage is far from feasible at present, since the general effect of any increase in the purchasing power of rural workers, would react adversely on prices, production, employment, savings, indebtedness and thus upset the efforts and policy of Governments, in relation to price stabilisation, reduction in the cost of living and of stimulating savings and remedying unemployment. It is, however, otherwise to look at this proposition in a period of depression when prices

and employment keep on falling, when any increase in the spending power of a large number of consumers tends to work as income supplements and stimulates the demand for agricultural produce and products of industry and therefore create factors which arrest the fall in employment of the community as a whole. In the existing context of rising living costs and falling employment it would be somewhat erroneous to push up the wage rates of an overwhelmingly large number of agricultural workers which would have the effect of aggravating the existing conditions. We, therefore, think that the case for the fixation of general minimum wage for the lowest unskilled agricultural worker is completely ruled out.

86. It is not known whether other State Governments, who probably considered the same issue, came to different conclusions apart from what the Planning Commission have stated in their final report. Certain States such as PEPSU, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had appointed committees to enquire into this question, but we have not been able to get copies of the reports of those committees from which we could have been able to follow the arguments on which their decisions were based. It, however, appears that, barring the Government of PEPSU, no State Government has fixed minimum wages for agriculture, for the whole State, separately for attached labour and for casual labour employed in specific operations. In PEPSU, the rates of wages which have been fixed district-wise vary from Rs. 250/- to Rs. 300/- per annum, or Rs. 21/- to Rs. 25/- a month, respectively with meals or foodgrains of equivalent value with meals. For the latter category of workers, the rates have been framed for heavy and light operations. The rates for heavy work vary from Re. 1/- to Rs. 1-8-0 per day with meals or from Rs. 1-8-0 to Rs. 2/- per day with meals. For light work, they vary district-wise from Annas twelve to Re. 1/- per day with meals and from Rs. 1-4-0 to Rs. 1-8-0 per day without meals.

87. The Assam Government have fixed wages in agriculture only for one district, namely Cachar for the employees engaged in ploughing, sowing, transplanting and threshing operations. The Assam rates are Re. 1/- per day in threshing, Rs. 1-4-0 in ploughing and sowing and Rs. 1-8-0 in transplanting. The conditions attached to these rates which, in our view, are sufficiently important indicate that they are fixed subject to the condition that the present level of prices of rice and paddy remain the same. It is difficult to say, without further examination whether this condition is valid since, in our view the Minimum Wages Act does not allow a State Government to fix rates of wages which are conditional, even though there is a specific provision by which wage rates be revised or special allowances could be adjusted with cost of living indices.

88. The Government of Bihar have fixed minimum rates of wages for agriculture, purely as an experimental measure, for the district of Patna only, and it has been stated that the question of their application to other districts would depend primarily on the success of this experiment. For this purpose they divided the district into two areas. Group I covers those areas which are irrigated by electrically operated water pumping sets from canals, water tanks, while Group II covers areas excluded by Group I. The rates of wages have been fixed for four different categories of workers including different agricultural operations and the rates of wages fixed for them separately have been linked with the prices of certain agricultural produce. But it is not known how these rates would be adjusted, when there are fluctuations in the prices of those commodities. The rates of wages fixed according to agricultural operations for Group II are mainly intended to cover non-irrigated areas.

89. This brief recital of the action taken by the State Governments of which information is available with us indicates that for the present, those Governments did not find it feasible to fix a minimum rate of wages for agricultural workers for the whole of the State. We are, therefore, fortified in our conclusion that it will not be possible at least, for the present, to fix a minimum wage for agricultural workers in Madhya Bharat. It is, however, different to think of the fixation of such rates for specified areas purely as an experimental measure until further experience of the action taken by the Governments of other States becomes known.

90. The table given below shows the index numbers of the money value of wages for the years 1938-39 and 1949-50 for certain agricultural operations for men, women and children in different zones together with the wage rates:—

Table showing the index numbers of the money value of wages for the years 1938-39 and 1949-50 in certain agricultural operations for men, women and children in different zones together with wage rates:

Operations	Zone	1938-39	1949-50	Index Number
		Rs. As. P.	Rs. As. P.	
<i>Ploughing</i>	Men	I 0-3- 6	1- 2- 0	514.3
		II 0-3- 0	0-15- 7	519.4
		III 0-4- 0	0-11- 9	293.8
		IV 0-4- 0	0-12- 0	300.0
	Average for State	0-3- 4	0-15- 4	460.0
<i>Sowing</i>	Men	I 0-3- 3	1- 0-10	517.9
		II 0-2-11	0-12- 7	431.4
		III 0-4- 6	0-13-10	307.4
		IV 0-4- 0	1- 0- 0	400.0
	Average for State	0-3- 5	0-13-11	407.3
" Women	I	0-2- 1	0-12- 2	584.0
		II 0-2- 5	0-10- 6	434.4
		III 0-3- 3	0-11- 3	346.2
		IV 0-4- 0	0-12- 0	300.0
	Average for State	0-2- 7	0-11- 1	429.0
" Children	I	0-1-10	0-11-11	650.0
		II 0-1- 9	0- 7- 9	442.9
		III 0-3- 9	0- 8- 6	226.7
		IV ...	..	...
	Average for State	0-2- 0	0- 8- 5	420.8
<i>Weeding</i>	Men	I 0-2- 2	0-13- 9	634.6
		II 0-2- 2	0- 8- 6	392.3
		III 0-3- 6	0-10- 5	297.6
		IV 0-3- 0	0-12- 0	400.0
	Average for State	0-2- 6	0-10-19	413.3

Operations	Zone	1938-39	1949-50	Index Number
		Rs.As.P.	Rs.As.P.	
<i>Weeding</i>				
Women	I	0-2- 2	0-11- 2	515.4
	II	0-2- 1	0- 8- 6	408.0
	III	0-2- 6	0- 8- 5	336.7
	IV	0-2- 0	0-12- 0	600.0
Average for State		0-2- 2	0- 9- 5	434.6
Children	I	0-2- 0	0-10-11	545.8
	II	0-1-10	0- 7- 6	409.1
	III	0-2- 1	0- 6- 8	320.0
	IV	0-2- 0	0- 8- 0	400.0
Average for State		0-1-11	0- 8- 5	439.1
<i>Harvesting:</i>				
Men	I	0-4- 7	1- 9- 0	545.4
	II	0-3- 4	0-15- 6	465.0
	III	0-5- 0	1- 2- 0	360.0
	IV	0-4- 0	1- 0- 0	400.0
Average for State		0-3-11	1- 2- 3	465.9
Women	I	0-4- 4	1- 6- 7	521.1
	II	0-3- 2	0-15- 1	476.3
	III	0-3- 9	1- 0- 2	431.1
	IV	0-4- 0	0-12- 0	300.0
Average for State		0-3- 9	1- 1- 0	453.3
<i>Harvesting:</i>				
Children	I	0-3- 0	1- 0- 5	547.2
	II	0-2- 8	0-11- 6	431.3
	III	0-2- 3	...	...
	IV	0-4- 0	0- 8- 0	200.0
Average for State		0-2-10	0-13- 4	470.6

(NOTE:—Rates prevailing in 1938-39 being equal to 100).

91. It would appear from the figures given in the above table that between 1938-39 and 1949-50, the rates of wages paid in important agricultural operations have risen sympathetically with the increase in agricultural prices though not necessarily with the cost of living in the rural areas. In ploughing, index numbers of wage rates had touched over 500 in Zones I and II while they were 300 or below only in two Zones III and IV. In sowing, the index number of wage rates worked below 400 only in Zones III and IV for women workers while it was very low 226.7 in respect of children employed in the same operation. In weeding, they worked below 300 in Zone III, in respect of men and a little over 300 in respect of women and children. In harvesting, the index number of wage rates for men, women and children had crossed 500 in Zone I and they were between 425 to 475 in Zone II, but they were below 400 for men in Zone III and 300 or below up to 200 in Zone IV for women and children respectively, which would indicate that over a period of ten years or more wages

in certain operations for men, women and children have not increased in response with the rise in prices as they should ordinarily have.

92. This brings us to the unavoidable question of the scope still left open for the exploitation of labour of children or women or men, or sometimes of all together, in certain operations as in the case of Zone III. The table given below shows the index numbers of the money value of wages in 1949-50 for certain agricultural operations in the four zones:—

Table showing the index numbers of the money value of wages in 1949-50 for certain agricultural operations in the four zones

	I	II	III	IV	STATE
1. Ploughing:					
Men	514.3	519.4	293.8	300.0	460.0
2. Sowing:					
Men	525.1	431.4	307.4	400.0	407.3
Women	584.0	434.4	346.2	400.0	429.0
Children	650.0	442.9	226.7	—	420.8
	586.4	436.2	293.4	—	419.3
3. Weeding:					
Men	634.6	392.3	297.6	400.0	413.3
Women	515.5	408.0	336.7	600.0	434.6
Children	545.8	409.1	320.0	400.0	439.1
	565.3	403.1	318.1	466.6	429.0
4. Harvesting:					
Men	545.4	465.0	360.0	400.0	465.9
Women	521.1	476.3	431.1	300.0	453.3
Children	547.2	431.3	...	200.0	470.6
	537.9	457.5	...	300.0	463.3

93. From the penultimate column of the above table it is clear that index numbers of the money value of wages for the year 1949-50 were low in Zone III in Ploughing (Men), Sowing (Men and Children), Weeding (Men, Women and Children), and Harvesting (Women and Children). That the whole of Zone III is a "depressed area" as envisaged by the Planning Commission is, therefore, a point beyond dispute. In this Zone, a man employed for ploughing received a wage represented by the index number 293.8 as compared to 460 for the State; while in sowing, the index number of wages drawn by men, women and children was 293.4 as related to the index number 419.3 for the State. The position with regard to weeding is almost alike. The low wages paid to children in Zone IV in Harvesting is probably due to the fact that the nature of the occupation itself is short lived, or their labour easily available as compared to those of men and women.

94. The concept of a low wage pocket as developed by the Planning Commission means "the areas where wages are generally lower by about the third than the average wage for a State", and it would therefore appear, on the basis of zone-wise and operation-wise comparison, that Zone III or the whole of the Nimar District was a low wage paying area which is suitable for the future introduction of the Minimum Wages Act. The survey also reveals that this district has its own peculiarities such as its having an independent homogeneous Zone; a fairly prosperous agriculture when rains are adequate; potentialities for intensive cultivation of cotton, oil-seeds, wheat and products of horticulture and the scope for the development of cottage industries. In the Nimar District, according to the survey there was no practice of paying wages in cash or kind with perquisites both to men, and women, while the Nimar labourer was reported to be immobile and home-sick. It also satisfied the further test laid down by the Planning Commission that the Act may be applied to areas included for intensive development under a Community Project.

95. The survey, however, furnishes certain figures which would run counter to such a suggestion since the percentage of total earners of the families surveyed was highest in this zone as compared to other zones which would imply that the cost of a minimum wage, if fixed, would be the highest per agricultural family. The average earning strength per family was also reported to be highest in this Zone 2.58 as compared to 1.98 in Zone IV, 2.26 in Zone I, and 2.32 in Zone II. Whatever may be the suitability of this district for the purpose of introducing the Act by theoretical standards, it is also true that this is the biggest district of the State with an area of 5,208 square miles, while its population is also the highest being 7.59 lakhs which between the inter-census years had increased by 14 per cent. It is expected that this district has a very large number of agricultural workers with or without land, and if minimum wages were fixed for the whole district in the face of these facts, what their probable effect on food prices, production and employment would be cannot be forestalled. We cannot also ignore that this year the district was affected by a draught, the after effects of which will take some time to fade away.

96. It is clear that administratively it would be impossible to administer the law—even its bare essentials—in a district where the communications system has been reported to be poor. It is mainly for this and other reasons that we are not inclined to fix minimum rates of wages for this district as a whole. The obligation flowing from the fixation of any minimum rate under section 3 of the Act would also expose the State Government to fix the hours of work for a normal working day inclusive of intervals, a day of rest and for payment of overtime rates on a day of rest under section 13, which it would be impossible to fulfil without incurring considerable additional cost. There is also the need, if rates are fixed, to enforce the Act, fairly rigorously which is difficult in the existing stage of our rural administration, and wages inspectorate a fact which seems to have weighed both with the Planning Commission and the experts of the I.L.O. We are, therefore, convinced that we must look in other directions for the first practicable application of this Act.

97. The survey authorities have prominently mentioned 9 villages out of the 24 surveyed, which appeared to them to be low wage pockets as defined by the Planning Commission since the wages paid in them were lower by about one-third from the average for the State. We think, it would be really sound, as a first step in the fixation of minimum rates of wages in agriculture, to experiment with these areas where the average daily wages paid to men were found to be

annas ten or less, which are admittedly very low. By fixing a minimum wage for the lowest unskilled worker, we may be in a position to exercise some corrective influence on the depressed wage rates, in the areas surrounding the villages named in the table below. Only one of these nine villages was from Zone I, six from Zone II and two from Zone III. The list of the villages together with the district in which they are situated is given below:—

	District.	Name of village.
1.	Shivpuri	Sataiya
2.	Rajgarh	Chandani Jagir
3.	Ujjain	Salakhedi
4.	Ujjain	Joonapani
5.	Rajgarh	Motipura
6.	Shajapur	Naraingaon
7.	Dewas	Nimalaya
8.	Nimar	Julwania
9.	Nimar	Sundrel.

98. The Committee thinks that to start with a minimum wage may be fixed for casual workers only, as an experimental measure, in the Rajpur Tehsil in the Nimar District—Zone III, in which the sample village of Julwania is situated. This Tehsil in addition to its being in Zone III—the Depressed area, has the advantage of its being selected for Community Development Project and as such fixation of minimum wages would further contribute to the benefits already conferred by rural development schemes. It is felt that in the light of experience of implementing minimum wages gained in this Tehsil, steps to extend the same to this and other districts may be taken cautiously. Considering the special features of Madhya Bharat in so far as they relate to the type of our agriculture, the number of landless labourers, under-developed nature of the economy and a complete absence of data and the action taken by the other States Governments, we think it would be adequate under the circumstances to take the action as proposed above without creating serious difficulties for the Government and without risking the scope for the development of our agriculture and of employment for our labour.

99. This brings us to the second term of our reference under which we are required to recommend the quanta or rates of wages which may be fixed in a particular area and for a particular class of employment.

100. On pages 21 to 26 of their report, the Committee constituted by Government for fixing minimum rates of wages for the Bidi industry including tobacco manufactory have analysed the implications of the minimum wage as distinct from the 'fair' or 'living' wages. We do not propose to retread all the ground traversed by that Committee, in this matter since there are special difficulties in dealing with agricultural workers. We have no data before us regarding the cost of living of the agricultural worker with or without land or the budgets of family expenditure of an average agricultural family. It is difficult to obtain figures of the cost of agricultural produce or to determine the average or marginal size of a farm where agricultural labour is hired. We only have the rates of wages paid in different agricultural operations in certain seasons, but information with regard to the earnings of workmen during the off season is almost unknown. It would also be very risky to make an assumption that an average agricultural earner is employed throughout the year and

to attempt to fix a daily rate of wages on the basis of a year's family expenditure.

101. In view of the difficulties expressed above, we are not in favour of making any attempt at fixing either a fair or a subsistence wage which would meet the cost of his prime needs of life and have therefore no option, but to follow a somewhat rough and ready method which as observed by the I.L.O. Report represents a compromise between social responsibility and economic feasibility mostly depending on the following:—

(1) The average level of wages paid in the villages and the territories surrounding Madhya Bharat;

(2) The existing wages paid to unskilled and semi-skilled workers in other employments governed by the Minimum Wages Act, such as Road construction, Stone breaking, Stone crushing and Building operations in the rural areas.

102. From the information collected by us, it appears that as compared to the average daily wages of annas thirteen and six pies paid in Madhya Bharat State, the following rates of wages were paid in the States adjoining Madhya Bharat:—

Bombay	—Rs. 1-1-6
Madhya Pradesh	—Annas 0-12-1
Bhopal	—Annas 0-15-0
U.P.	—Rs. 1-3-8
Rajasthan	—Rs. 1-3-3.

We, therefore, think that the minimum rates of wages for the villages named by us in the preceding paragraph may be as proposed in the last column of the table following:—

		Cash Wages Per day			
Operations		Madhya Bharat State 1949-50	Nimar Distt. 1949-50	Rates proposed by the Committee	
		Rs. AS. PS.	Rs. AS. PS.	Rs. AS. PS.	
1. Ploughing	... Men	0-12- 4	0-11- 9	1- 0- 0	
2. Embanking	... Men	0-12- 0	0-12- 0	1- 0- 0	
3. Harrowing	... Men	0-12- 5	0-12- 0	1- 0- 0	
	Women	0- 5- 0	0- 5- 0	0-10- 0	
4. Manuring	... Men	0-11- 9	0-11- 6	0-12- 0	
	Women	0- 9- 0	0- 5- 0	0-10- 0	
5. Sowing	... Men	0-13- 8	0-14- 3	1- 0- 0	
	Women	0-11- 3	0-11- 0	0-13- 0	
6. Transplanting	... Men	0-10-11	0-12- 0	0-14- 0	
	Women	0- 8- 9	0- 9- 6	0-12- 0	
7. Weeding	... Men	0- 9- 8	0-10- 0	0-12- 0	
	Women	0- 8- 8	0- 7- 9	0-10- 0	
8. Irrigating	... Men	0- 7-11	0- 6- 0	0-12- 0	
	Women	0- 7- 2	...	...
9. Harvesting	... Men	1- 0- 6	1- 1- 6	1- 4- 0	
	Women	0-14- 5	0-15- 6	1- 2- 0	
10. Threshing	... Men	0-12- 4	0-14- 6	1- 0- 0	
	Woman	0-10- 6	0-13- 6	0-15- 0	

Note:—(1) These rates of wages are applicable only to casual agricultural workers from which a deduction would be liable to be made for the

money value of perquisites to be determined from time to time by the Government. These rates of wages do not apply to attached workers. As regards the hours of work the spreadover will be from Sun-rise to Sun-set, subject to a maximum of 10 hours exclusive of rest interval of 2 hours.

Note:—(2) These rates of wages should be brought into force from the commencement of next agricultural season after 31-12-1953.

103. It would appear from the above table that the rates of wages for men in the first two operations which are heavy have been upgraded so as to conform to the States' pattern of a minimum basic wage for an adult male worker without dearness allowance. The benefit of this higher rate has been given also to men employed in operations 5 and 10. The rates of wages for women in operations 3 and 4 have been kept at a low level even though they have been slightly upgraded since women from these occupations should not be displaced by men. The rates of women in the remaining operations have been improved or marginally adjusted as a consequence of the upgrading of men's wages; but in some of them the increase is due to higher hours of work as compared to those at present. In occupations Nos. 5 and 9 which are essentially seasonal in character, the wages of men and women have been kept almost at par realising the fact that during the peak period of employment both male and female workers should not be deprived of the benefit they obtain by the laws of supply and demand.

104. Under item III of the terms of reference we are required to recommend class of employees who may be exempted from the operation of the Act. The definition of the term "employee" under Section 2(i) of the Act is sufficiently wide so as to cover all unskilled, skilled manual or clerical workers in respect of whom minimum rates of wages have been fixed. It would, therefore, follow that omission to fix minimum rates of wages would take employees out of the scope of the Act particularly in view of the language of section 3, read with the definition of the word "employer". Under section 2(c) it is clear that while it is the duty of the State Government to fix minimum rates of wages under section 3 read with the second proviso which gives an option to the appropriate Government to fix minimum rates of wages only for a part of the State or any class of such employment. The non-fixation of minimum rates of wages for a particular category of employees may not amount to exemption in respect of which something positive must be done by the State Government. Section 26 of the Act empowers the Government to direct that certain provisions of the Act shall not apply to any class of employees, which either is a case of non-application of the Act of some of its provisions and not of exemption. If under the above term of reference, we are required to recommend to which categories of employees in agriculture the provisions of the Act shall not be applicable, we suggest the following:—

- (1) Herdsmen.
- (2) Watchmen.
- (3) Persons whose employment is intermittent such as:—
 - (a) Poppy capsule Inciser and picker,
 - (b) Pickers of cotton pods.
- (4) Labour employed for embankment.

105. If the suggestion made by us that the Act should apply only to the Rajpur Tehsil in Nimar District, is accepted, it would, however, follow that an order

under Section 26(2) of the Act may be necessary with regard to the rest of the State.

106. We have stated in the previous paragraph that the fixation of a minimum rate of wages for agricultural workers for the State as a whole or any of its district, being difficult under the existing conditions, such fixation may be attempted only in selected depressed areas and for certain agricultural operations.

107. The last term of our reference requires us to recommend "What further ameliorative measures may be taken in the interest of agricultural workers in Madhya Bharat, e.g., the establishment of suitable subsidiary industries, training of agricultural workers etc."

108. Both the International Labour Organisation and the Planning Commission have in their reports explained the need for the economic development of the rural areas, which could be steadily brought about by taking any of the following measures at the national level:—

- (1) Effective utilisation of surplus labour.
- (2) Rapid spreading of improved techniques requiring little additional capital.
- (3) Careful selection of appropriate projects for capital investment.
- (4) Full use of imported resources.
- (5) Restriction of non-essential consumption and investment.

The Planning Commission who have reasoned differently, have laid stress on the need for the reorganization of agriculture, extension of irrigation, intensive cultivation and improvement in agricultural practices. They also refer to the need for the reform of land tenures. They further state that in reorganizing the rural economy on cooperative lines, the aim should be to place the agricultural worker in a position of equality in status and opportunity with other sections of the village community. It will appear that these are matters of national economic policy, which the State Government can endeavour to shape, but cannot directly enforce on the strength of its own resources, though it is true that a good deal is being done under the State's Five Year Plan, in that direction.

109. Since we have to confine ourselves to making suggestions for "ameliorative measures" alone, we do not propose to enter into an academic discussion of what is desirable or feasible as a programme of economic development. With a view to obtain the first-hand impressions and views of those, who work in the agricultural sector of our population, we had issued a special questionnaire which is reproduced at the end of this report.

110. Most of the replies to the questionnaire are more or less of a descriptive character, and give useful information regarding the existing conditions of employment, unemployment and under-employment, wages, living conditions the descriptions of the rural scene in certain cases being extremely pictorial. It is not surprising that the poverty and low standards of life in the rural areas should excite sympathy in the minds of most, but few acknowledge the existence of surplus and superfluous labour itself being its principal cause. While it is admitted that the main cause of rural unemployment is the seasonal character of agricultural employment, which lasts for a little over four months, it is only during the remaining part of the year that the agricultural worker faces serious unemployment with its attendant consequences.

111. The remedies suggested though of a stereo-typed character are worth recording, and even though some of them are not specific they are capable of being further explored by a more detailed study or experiment.

112. A very peculiar remedy suggested is the redistribution of land to landless agricultural workers, which we call BHOODAN YADYNA. In view of the momentum which this movement has acquired in India recently, it is difficult to pronounce a judgment on the efficacy of this measure, until such time as detailed statistics of the total quantity of land obtained, its quality in respect of fertility and accessibility, and lastly, the manner, in which it comes to be re-distributed among landless agriculturists are known. Our comments on the survey, however, indicate that the total number of agricultural labourers is about 16 per cent of the total population or a little over 4 lakhs, the lands gifted away under Bhoodan could only touch a small fringe of the actual problem. While the voluntary efforts in this direction such as the Bhoodan movement, have their own place, it is felt that steps be taken through suitable legislation for redistribution of land in such a way that land passes in the hands of those who actually cultivate it. Such a legislative measure should fix a ceiling on the area of holding to be possessed by one individual at about 50 acres, while at the same time, to prevent holdings from being un-economic, it should stipulate the minimum size for consolidation of holdings per individual at about 15 acres. The present land tenure system and tenancy legislation in this State do not provide for such a process of re-distribution, it only provides for future accumulation of holdings, but leaves the present holders of large areas untouched. A natural corollary of such redistribution may be to provide financial and technical assistance through appropriate agencies like co-operative societies may have to be provided. An important feature of such a scheme of redistribution of land would be that the area as available would be allotted by sale or otherwise to landless labourers of the State or those persons whose existing holdings are uneconomic. As such a legislation would take some time, it is felt that, to begin with the land already at disposal of the State may be dealt with as indicated above.

113. In our comments on the report of Agricultural Labour Inquiry we had pointed out that the family of an agricultural worker had 4.6 members as compared to those of land owners 5.4. It is not impossible that the alteration in the status of an agricultural worker to that of an owner, may lend a stimulus to the size of the family of the former, which now is low. In that event a question may arise when the holdings of the present agricultural workers may have to support bigger families on an average, or also a new class of landless labourers might again raise its head, unless adequate steps to counter this effect are taken without delay. We would, therefore, suggest that it may be worthwhile to carry the gospel of family limitation to the rural areas as the State Government propose to do in respect of the urban areas. In saying so, we are strengthened in our view by the suggestion made in the replies to the questionnaire and the recent report submitted to Parliament by the Health Minister of Central Government on the acceptability and success of the Rhythm Method in Ramnagaram in Mysore State. Advocacy and popularisation of the safe period Method of Birth Control should, in our view, constitute a very important measure of amelioration which would not require an expensive organisation and * may show good results in course of time if there is sufficient

*THE FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION: Punjab, in its report has stated that each clinic is estimated to cost Rs. 500/- for provision of special stores material and about Rs. 200/- for recurring expenditure every year.

tact, courage and patience in its introduction, particularly because it could be founded on the religious sentiments of the people in the matter of fasts and festivals.

114. Another suggestion made in this regard is the provision of rural credit through cooperative banks. It is argued that a majority of agricultural workers are heavily indebted, and unless this indebtedness is completely liquidated, there would be no improvement in their economic position and evils of pledging labour in advance and allied malpractices could not be tackled. Even if the existing rates of wages were slightly raised so as to touch the subsistence level, it is not certain that the differential increase in wage would be appropriated for meeting the existing debts, and the problem would still survive. This would not also prevent food prices from rising as has been stated in an earlier chapter of this report. One thing, however, is certain, that the existing indebtedness by reducing the bargaining strength of labour depresses the existing rates of wages which otherwise would have been higher, whilst the high incidence of indebtedness increases the supply of labour available from the family of indebted workman. This also leads to the possibility of double transactions under which the village money-lender buys corn at a favourable rate at the harvest time, and issue the same to the workman on a higher rate during the off season and land changes hands from the cultivators to non-cultivators. We feel inclined to suggest that legislation on the lines of the Bombay Debt Conciliation Act, which we are told existed in the former Holkar State, should be undertaken. This suggestion has been made in most of the replies to the questionnaire.

115. The Planning Commission in their draft report had said that the agricultural workers being landless find it difficult to get financial accommodation from cooperative banks, and hence suggested the necessity of improving the existing debt legislation. It is not known why in the final report of the Commission this suggestion has not been developed.

116. In most of the replies to our special questionnaire, a demand has been made for the opening of extensive communications which will connect villages of agricultural importance with the neighbouring towns, by which the local produce would find a more remunerative market in the surrounding areas. It is hoped that this question has already been examined in detail by the State Planning Board and appropriate action consistent with our financial resources is being taken. Since road construction, in our view, offers employment to a large number of agricultural workers during the off-season, the relief obtainable to workmen would be substantial, if the programme of road construction is so timed that roads are taken up for construction and repairs during the slack agricultural seasons and in areas of scarcity. Since the draft rates of wages for this employment which is covered by the Minimum Wages Act, for unskilled workers in the rural areas are Rs. 1-4-0 for men and Re. 1/- for women, there is no doubt that the long term effect of the fixation of such rates on the wages in agricultural operations would be favourable, and they may be expected to correct anomalies in the existing wage structure in agriculture in certain areas. The selective approach suggested by the Planning Commission has virtually the same implications, in so far as the minimum wages can be fixed on registered farms would influence the wage rates in the surrounding areas. We, therefore, feel that as we are not in favour of the fixation of agricultural wages throughout the State or any of its districts, the rate of wages paid to workers employed in road construction would influence the wage rates in allied agricultural operations in the neighbouring areas. We are, however, aware that it would be difficult to

finance such a programme in all the districts simultaneously and would, therefore, suggest a priority for Nimar District where the wages were found to be the lowest and to the villages in the following five districts:—

- (1) Salaiya in Shivpuri District.
- (2) Chandni Jagir and Motipura in Rajgarh District.
- (3) Salakhedi and Juna Pani in Ujjain District.
- (4) Narayangaon in Shajapur District.
- (5) Nimalaya in Dewas District.

117. What has been said above would also apply to construction of bridges and culverts to which also our attention has been drawn in the replies to the questionnaire. It is important to remember that in this connection the Planning Commission have stated that there is considerable scope for the formation of labour cooperatives in the villages, to take small contracts for pieces of construction work such as those connecting village roads with feeder roads, minor irrigation works which mainly involve personal labour under technical supervision.

118. One of the questions asked in the questionnaire related to the development of cooperative farms at Government expense for providing employment to landless labourers and the contribution which such labourers or the village community should be expected to make in this respect. We regret to say that this suggestion has not found favour with most, who have pointed out that cooperation between the landless, if not entirely meaningless, is without substance, since a multitude of those who have only labour to sell would not be able to produce wealth without other means such as the capital, land and leadership. It is depressing that the Community Project Administration have in a recent survey reached the conclusion that the future of their programme may not be held up for lack of money, but for lack of leadership, which the Government cannot create. The suggestion of cooperative farms also presupposes that fairly large tracts of uncultivable land are available for cultivation which is not the present position. The question of providing the initial capital, if land were available, is also bound to create difficulties, as none, not even the Revenue or the Cooperative Department would regard a landless labourer or their cooperative society as credit-worthy.

119. The Collector of Zone IV which is an Adivasi area, who seemed to be unaware of these difficulties has submitted a proposal which is attached as a note to this report. In view of the financial liability which this proposal involves, we are not in a position to recommend it, unless there are reasons, to believe that its cost could be met from the grants of Rs. 23 crores and 4 crores to which the Planning Commission have referred on page 205 of their report.

120. One of the common suggestion made in the replies is that Government should restrict the use of mechanical appliances which displace manual labour and it principally refers to the existence of flour and oil mills there, we think no purpose will be served by considering it, since the total number of oil mills working with one or more expellers are idle on account of shortage of oilseeds. The Industries Department, we are told, have already stopped the issue of licenses for setting up oil mills in the rural areas, and they are actively encouraging the use of Ghanis, the product of which is being popularised. They do not also permit the installation of power looms since it prevents the employment of semi-skilled artisans.

121. It is realised in all quarters that there is a marked absence of subsidiary employment to the agricultural population which needs greater attention. One of the suggestions in this respect is to encourage the use of Khadi which would provide subsidiary employment to the agriculturist at his very door. Keeping in view the results of experiment of Madras State in this direction, the State should carefully tackle this measure avoiding the pitfalls in this approach. The Committee has particularly to draw attention to the twin problems of marketing of Khadi and cheapening its cost for which a suitable organisation should be set up. Much can be done by way of organising 'Khadi Weeks' in popularising its use and developing a taste for hand-spun and woven cloth among the population.

122. Having dealt with the suggestions made in the replies to the special questionnaire we turn round to some concrete suggestions which we feel disposed to make.

123. Our survey of the report of Agricultural Labour Enquiry had drawn attention to the fact that most of the houses of agricultural workers were one-roomed, insanitary, ill-ventilated, and *Kutchas*. The Planning Commission have, on page 206 of their report, discussed this question at length and suggested the allotment of house sites to agricultural workers free of charge by persuasion or legislation, as the need may be. Though the problem of rural housing has not so far been studied with the depth it deserves, the I.L.O. have in their recent publication recommended a short-life housing programme for the rural areas.

124. The report recommends 'short-life housing programme' in which houses with an average life of 3 to 10 years would be built utilizing locally available raw materials such as clay, lime, jungle wood, bamboo and thatch etc. The merit of the 'short-life housing programme' is that it would absorb locally available materials and the unskilled labour, both of which are at present under utilised. Technically also there is no constructional difficulty in building a safe, hygienic and well-designed short-life house provided it is of a single-floor construction. Such short-life houses could be built for housing the workers engaged in seasonal factories in this State.

125. In those villages where there is occupationally an excess in the number of potters, it would be interesting to consider as to whether they could not be kept busy during the off-season in the making of country bricks of which we have seen some fine samples during our tour, of some of the villages in the Southern division. The cost of transport of such bricks to the towns and cities makes their use uneconomic for urban or suburban housing, and therefore, it is impossible to stimulate a demand for the product of this trade in the cities. We, therefore, recommend that a team of experts of the Public Health Engineering Department should undertake a technical study of this subject with a view to find out how such houses could be built in the rural areas; while the revenue authorities could devote attention to find new house sites or expanding the old ones.

126. While this Committee's report was being drafted, the Government of India announced on the 25th August 1953, their scheme of starting 80,000 one-teacher schools throughout the country. By a letter sent by the Chairman of the Committee to the Education Department the Government was requested to take advantage of this offer under which, if the State's population is taken as a basis, Madhya Bharat would be able to secure 1,800 schools manned by single teachers in its rural areas, since our survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry indicated a high percentage of illiteracy among the boys and girls upto 15 years of age, who do not find employment as helpers. Unless the financial implications of the grant which the Government of India would make are fully

known, it would be difficult to say how many such schools could be started in this State, because the problem of finding accommodation and rural minded teachers would present separate difficulties. In any case, we feel that we should not lose our claims of getting the assistance from the Centre, as it would constitute an important measure for the amelioration of the rural population.

127. Since, in this State, only 50 per cent of the land is irrigated by wells, we are impressed by the possibilities for the introduction of Persian wheels in those areas and districts which are suitable for it, where the level of water is upto 30 feet. It has been observed that where the holdings of an owner or of a tenant is 6 acres or more, it is not possible for them to irrigate more than half of their acreage with a single pair of bullocks, since water is not available in sufficient quantity. It would be possible to make economic use of that land, one pair of bullocks and the worker, if the use of Persian wheels is explained to owners and tenants of land and the consumption of the same was subsidised to the extent of 50 per cent the remainder of 50 per cent being treated as a loan. Since Government advance Taccavi loans for the deepening maintenance and repairs of wells, it is not known why the use of the Persian wheels should not be encouraged by the payment of subsidy on an experimental basis, the percentage of subsidy being reduced from year to year as more experience is gained. Along with the use of improved seed, this would bring more acreage under cultivation and increase the scope for the employment of agricultural labourers, save the cost of importing food, and generally increase employment for the village blacksmith, carpenter, cobbler etc. The Labour Department had an occasion to handle this subject once when they had expressed the hope that if about 1,000 such wheels could be sold every year, it would be possible to keep most of their idle engineering factories busy throughout the year. The recommendation as made by us, however, is intended to be a measure of amelioration for the rural areas.

128. Our attention has been drawn to a local hemp known as "Ramban" or "Rambans" which is usually grown by the cultivators along the borders of their fields throughout Madhya Bharat. While a hedge of Rambans serves as good fencing, it is also known to provide a fibre for the manufacture of ropes, matting etc. The trade name of this fibre is "Sisal" which according to the Chief Conservator of Forests can also be used for the manufacture of artificial silk. The botanical name for the most common plant of this species is *Agave americana*, while other species of *Agave* termed as *agave cantala* or *sisalana* or *Ghaipati* are also found and can be grown in Madhya Bharat, but there is no material difference in fibres yielded by them. The Chief Conservator of Forests states "it can be grown on any soil and in any locality—even in dry areas," the method of propagation being through bulbils (or buds or plants in dormant form). These when planted and watered grow into Rambans plants, whilst entire plants may also be planted, the leaves of which yield the Sisal fibre of commercial importance.

129. The Jailor, Central Jail, Indore, mentioned that if he was given a sufficient quantity of these leaves he could, extract the fibre and a cottage industry for the making of mattings in any colours and designs could be started so as to employ about 200 workers. On making further inquiries, we found from a bulletin issued by the Industries and Commerce Department of the Mysore State that the commercial possibilities of this hemp appear to be substantial if it is scientifically grown, as was done in the first decade of this century by the Coorg Government and later by the Mysore and Madras Governments. It is significant that "the large succulent growth obtained in rich land

is inimical both to the quantity and quality of fibre produced; therefore, somewhat poor land of a loose stony nature is always preferred, as in addition to giving better results generally it accommodates a larger number of plants to the acre". The bulletin also suggests that *agave, rigida, sisalana*, which has the best fibre yielding properties could be successfully cultivated on waste land, the number of plants to be accommodated per acre being 1,000.

130. Since the plant takes about five years to mature and yields only 5 per cent of the weight of leaves as fibre, it is not difficult to realise the commercial possibilities of growing this hemp in the extensive unoccupied lands of Madhya Bharat State, which would serve as a base for new cottage industries and would not require heavy capital expenditure. Cheap mattings are known to be in great demand, while the fibre when exported commands good prices. While regretting that we could not obtain the most recent literature on the subject which prevents us from developing this subject any further, we suggest that the agricultural, commercial and industrial possibilities of this cheap and simple fibre should be thoroughly explored by the State Government.

131: Suggestions made by Government officials who have evinced special interest in the subject and have previous experience in the problems of rural economy are classified below though they are not new.

FOOD AND ALLIED INDUSTRIES.

1. Manufacture of agricultural implements.
2. Making of charcoal and cutting firewood.
3. Dairy farming.
4. Food canning.
5. Jaggery manufacture—
 - (a) Date Palm.
 - (b) Sugar-cane in areas where the sugar-cane cannot be diverted to sugar factories.
6. Preparation and collection of manures—oil cakes, farm-yard manure, compost and bone-meal etc.
7. Oil Pressing.

CLOTHING AND ALLIED INDUSTRIES.

1. Block engraving for cloth printing.
2. Cotton ginning and pressing.
3. Leather tanning.
4. Weaving.
5. Bangle making from Lac.
6. Stitching of dresses of inferior servants.
7. Making of cotton buttons.
8. Katha making.
9. Making of shellac or lac.
10. Pattal and Dona making.
11. Brooms making.
12. Basket making.

132. Since it is outside our scope to pronounce a judgment on their economic possibilities, we would only recommend that the Industries Department and other specialised departments may be asked to undertake special surveys with a view to enable Government to take appropriate action on all or any one of them.

133. It is illustrated in term IV of reference that we make recommendations on the training of agricultural workers. The survey has revealed that while most of the agricultural workers are basically unskilled, the possibility of providing them better or alternative employment by training them in skilled agricultural operations still appears to be remote, because the present technique of agricultural production offers no scope for absorbing skilled workmen. In the present condition of agriculture, the unskilled worker is without employment and any training imparted to improve his skill would not be resultful, unless avenues for his skilled employment are found or widened. Similarly, the chances for an agricultural worker to become self-employed also appear to be slender, since at present the village economy is not developing as rapidly as its population. The only source of employment for the agricultural workers would, therefore, possibly exist in the subsidiary industries which would take time to develop.

134. We cannot, therefore, venture to make any concrete recommendations in this respect for want of data relating to local village industries in different zones which suffer for want of skilled labour, and the pattern of the new industries to be started in future. The Planning Commission's recommendation in this regard is also of a general nature by which they have suggested provision of "Special assistance by way of educational stipends and for vocational training". It has to be stressed that before imparting vocational or technical training, it is necessary to ascertain exact occupational nomenclature in which there is a shortage of skilled labour and as that information is wanting at present, as it would be meaningless to train unskilled workers for skilled occupations in which no employment could be guaranteed, and might at the same time convert unskilled unemployment into technical unemployment. While accepting the need for vocational training and guidance in a broad principle, we think that the subject is of sufficient importance to justify an expert enquiry which would indicate in what vocations of agricultural or industrial importance should the present unskilled workers be trained, and how best their services could be utilized after training.

135. Two members of the Committee who have experience of commercial farming have laid stress on Poultry-farming, apiculture, sheep-breeding, cattle-breeding and sericulture; collection of honey-wax and gum, tree planting, bunding of small nullahs, collection of neem seeds with a view to extract their oil as a base for soap; establishment of milk collection societies and pasteurisation; formation of cooperative societies for collection of tendu leaves for their export to bidi-making centres or eventual rolling into bidis.

136. In the view of the Chief Conservator of Forests a few societies started by them are doing well while the experience of Central Jail is also satisfactory.

137. In making the above recommendations relating to employments and village industries we are aware that the crux of the whole problem is the setting up of a quick-acting, thorough and specialised organisation which would have the necessary funds and staff to do a difficult job, under adverse conditions and in area from which village industries are decaying. Our existing Industries Directorate may therefore, be relieved of its responsibilities towards organised industries, and asked to devote exclusive attention to new rural and subsidiary industries, with the single objective of making the best use of the available raw material, labour and other resources, while its most important function would be to control costs and market the finished products. This task, formidable as it is, must be preceded by a complete survey of all the Districts from which alone, we can know what possibilities really exist, as any

vague concept of village industries without the necessary data and details can only lead to wasteful expenditure and a disproportionately high cost and locking of Government funds. It is only after such a survey has been made that a band of skilled co-operators, could be sent to the village area to develop proposals on cooperative lines, because it is difficult to expect any village industry to survive unless there is fullest cooperation amongst the workers and non-workers of the rural community. In some of the villages visited by the Committee, we were impressed by the offers of help made in the form of buildings, land or half of the capital requirements, and we have no doubt that more such offers could come along if and when a beginning is made in this direction.

138. Before concluding this report which we have endeavoured to confine to the terms of reference laid down in the Government Order, we must mention that if in dealing with certain topics we have some what swerved from the straight line, we have done so with a view to appreciate the many factors which touch a very complex problem such as of agricultural labour, and the priorities which are assigned in dealing with economic matters that affect the welfare of the community. Our theoretical work has been made less difficult by such valuable publications as the Report of the I.L.O. on the Problems of Wage Policy in Asian Countries and the two reports of the Planning Commission which have principally determined our approach whilst we have been guided generally by the facts and figures pertaining to the life of the agricultural communities supplied by the survey of the Agricultural Labour Inquiry. We, however, bear the entire responsibility for the conclusions reached by us on the basis of the data collected, information received and answers supplied to our questionnaire. We are, however, unhappy that our findings may appear to be of a negative nature, since we could not see our way to recommend a minimum rate of wages in agriculture either for the whole State or any of its districts. It was open to us, if we so desire to recommend that a minimum wage should be fixed for a district or districts which did not differ from the existing average or we could have prescribed as a minimum wage the existing lowest wage paid to an unskilled worker. Any such recommendation would have probably been more welcome than those made above, but we have chosen the path of not doing so.

139. Finally, therefore, we must say that the attainment of the objective of the general minimum wage for agriculture should be a terminal rather the starting point of a rather long process of gradual implementation of programme of general, social and economic development. As a great mind has said "a small and temporary improvement" "may really be the worst enemy, of a great and permanent improvement", which the Central and State Governments are determined to bring about in the life of the community as a whole.

140. In conclusion, we must thank all those who have assisted in the work of the Committee by replying to our questionnaire and mainly, the members of the Madhya Bharat Legislative Assembly and Heads of Departments who could find time from their heavy routine of public and departmental duties to help the Committee in its work. The original report had practically to be re-written and the brunt of re-drafting it was cheerfully borne by Shri A. S. Banavalikar, Commissioner of Labour, Madhya Bharat. In the interpretation of the statistical data and the numerous references he was assisted by officials of his department and the clerical work was promptly carried out by officials of the Offices of the Commissioner, Southern Division and the Labour Commissioner, which deserves appreciation. It may be noticed that out of total

appropriation of Rs. 6,000/- less than Rs. 2,000/- have been spent for this enquiry as the Committee was very careful in conducting the entire proceedings as economically as possible.

Sd/- K. R. GAWADE,
Chairman.

Sd./- A. S. BANAVALIKAR

Sd./- R. K. VARMA

Sd./- KANHAIYALAL KOTWAL

*Sd./- LAXMINARAYAN

*Sd./- RAM NARAYAN SHARMA.

Members.

*Subject to a note of dissent.

*With the exception of recommendations made in para 112, I agree with the other recommendations of this report. Regarding recommendation in para 112, I suggest that it is not of much importance in our state of present as a good deal of land is still lying uncultivated. In future when this problem is to be tackled individuals or companies who have developed their farms on mechanical basis or who have invested large capital in the development of the same should be given special encouragement and consideration and should not be disturbed in their endeavours.

Sd./- LAXMINARAYAN
(Seth Laxminarayan—Mandsaur)
Member.

*Mechanised cultivation is one of the main factors in increasing the output of agricultural produce. Intensive cultivation can only be possible by timely cultivation of land which is only possible through adopting mechanical system of cultivation. 50 acres is too small an area for this type of venture. To grow more food, mechanised cultivation is of tremendous importance. Limiting of area, as recommended in para 112, will not, at this stage be in the interests of agriculture which is the mainstay of India. It is likely to oust and to discourage better brains from the agricultural industry as other fields open to them may provide better scope for them and thus this step may prove to be detrimental to the progress of this industry. I agree with the rest of the Report.

Sd./- RAM NARAYAN SHARMA
Member.

APPENDIX

List of the names of persons from whom replies to the Committee's Questionnaire were received.

1. Shri Maur Singh, M.A., LL.B., Chandralok, Ujjain.
2. Dr. B. D. Chaturvedi, M.L.A., Karera.
3. Shri Kishanlal Malviya, M.L.A., Madhonagar, Ujjain.
4. Shri Barku Chauhan, M.L.A., Sendhwa.
5. The Conservator of Forests, Mhow.
6. Shri Sawaisingh Mandloi, M.L.A., Barud, Nimar.
7. Shri Badridatta Bhatt, M.L.A., Jawad.
8. The Director of Education, Gwalior.
9. The Collector, District Mandsaur.
10. The Collector, District Guna.
11. Shri Durgadas Suryawanshi, M.L.A., Madhonagar, Ujjain.
12. Shri Prabhudaya! Choubey, M.L.A., Khilchipur.
13. Shri Premsingh Solanki, M.L.A.
14. Shri Lakshmichandra Vaishya, Sabalgarh.
15. Shri Udayabhanu Chauhan, M.L.A., Sheopur.
16. Shri Bherulal Sewaji Chauhan, M.L.A., Mahidpur.
17. Shri Ratusingh Ramsingh, M.L.A., Kukshi.
18. Shri J. K. Kaul, Secretary, Development and Labour, Gwalior.
19. The Agricultural Production Commissioner, M. B., Gwalior.
20. Chaudhary Faizullah, M.L.A.
21. Shri Punamlal Burwa, Mungawali.
22. Shri P. L. Adsule, Research Scholar, School of Economics and Sociology, University of Bombay.
23. Shri Tularam, M.L.A., Shivpuri.
24. Shri Shyamsunder Patidar, Mandsaur.
25. Shri Sitaram Sadhu, M.L.A.
26. Shri Balmukund Mudgal, M.L.A., Rampur Kalan.
27. Shri Narhariprashad Sharma, M.L.A., Shivpuri.
28. Shri Jagannath.
29. Shri J. C. Jall, Manager, Hira Mills, Ujjain.
30. The District Agriculture Inspector, Mandsaur.
31. The Collector, District, Jhabua.
32. The Development Officer, Morena.
33. The Director of Industries, Indore.
34. Shri T. S. Pawar, I.A.S., Collector, Gird,

APPENDIX

An estimate of the number of agricultural workers in Madhya Bharat State

According to 1951 Census figures of occupational distribution of population, the number of cultivating labourers is 8.48 lakhs of the total population of 57.44 lakhs shown as "Agriculturists". As the figure of cultivating labourers includes both those who possess land and those who do not, it is necessary to separate these figures in order to arrive at the accurate number of agricultural labourers with and without land as given below:—

According to the survey of the Agricultural Labour Enquiry the percentage of "earners" including men, women and children comes to 25.8; while that of "helpers" comes to 25.2. Applying this percentage to the figure of cultivating labourers as given above, the number of 'earners' comes to 2.18 lakhs and that of 'helpers' to 2.13 lakhs, which together comes to 4.31 lakhs, which can be assumed to be the total number of agricultural workers with and without land. The survey figures further reveal that of the total population of 12,559 covered by the survey, 7.2 per cent. were reported to be agricultural workers with land; therefore, .31 lakhs (i.e. 7.2 per cent. of 4.31 lakhs) can be taken to be the number of agricultural workers with land, and the rest of 4 lakhs can be taken as the number of agricultural workers without land.

The above estimate of landless agricultural workers of 4.0 lakhs can be corroborated by another method which is briefly described as follows:—

Since the average size of the family of an agricultural worker consisted of 4.62 persons, 8.48 lakhs yields a figure of 1.83 lakhs families of agricultural workers. In order to find the average number of earners per family multiply the above figure by 2.27 which yields a figure of 4.15 lakhs of agricultural workers.

Since there is no major variation in the estimate of agricultural workers arrived at by these two independent methods, it would be safe to assume that the total number of families of landless agricultural labourers should not ordinarily exceed one lakh.

APPENDIX

Reply to Question No. 16 of the Committee's Special Questionnaire from the Collector, Jhabua District.

"Yes. As the question of providing employment is applicable to almost all in this tract, this experiment should certainly be made by the Government. This will greatly help in the general uplift of the Adivasis. Personal labour of obligatory nature can be the only contribution which these people can make towards such a scheme, in view of their extreme poverty.

My idea is that a big farm should be established by the Government and a sufficient number of young and strong bodied healthy persons, who may be willing to work hard and sincerely and honestly should be got together on voluntary basis and employed to work on this farm, which should fully be equipped with everything needed for its proper cultivation; there should be arrangements for irrigation, dairy and poultry, goat and sheep rearing, cattle breeding with means for some cottage industries and so on so that all the workers can be kept busy for the whole time all the year round.

The workers should be paid during the first year, Rs. 20/- per month (per male or female member) for maintenance, boys receiving about Rs. 10/- to Rs. 15/- according to their working capacity.

The Government should also provide for all the requirements of the establishment, such as bullocks, agricultural implements, seed, manure, food and fodder for cattle, in fact, everything needed; also required advances from time to time, to meet any essential expenses, the whole expenditure being treated as a Loan by the Government. No interest should be charged on this Loan.

The main control should, of course, be in the hands of a very experienced Government Agricultural Officer, who should mainly direct all the activities of the farm, help with his expert advice and wise guidance, provide new ideas and supervise and control expenses, which should be kept minimum. But at the same time he should use great tact and should not appear to be too much interfering.

In the management, the voice of the workers as well as village elders (who should also be consulted from time to time) should be given more weight; and they should be made to feel as if they are managing the whole show. This will create interest of all local people in the scheme and the farm will not be considered a Government concern. Chances of careless work will thus be minimised.

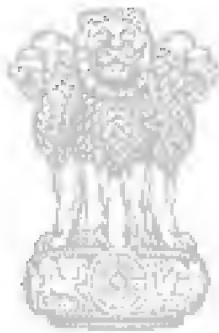
All the workers should be made to feel that by hard and honest work, they would ultimately earn the ownership of the farm in a few years' time.

It should be made obligatory upon every member to render hard and sincere whole time or even over-time service, providing some penalty for evasions and negligence. In short, it should be the aim of the officer to make them feel their stake in the concern, which they should consider as their very own property.

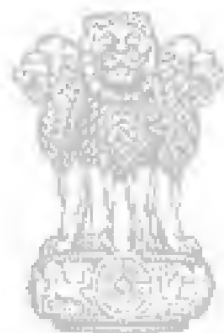
From the produce of the first year, a sufficient quantity of grain etc., should be kept reserved for the next year's maintenance of all the workers and the rest of the income to go to meet the running expenses of the farm, after meeting which, the balance should go to liquidate the Government loan.

This process should go on till all the Government money is fully repaid; then the farm should be made over to the workers, who will by the time learn everything as to how to manage the establishment properly.

As the people in this tract are most backward and conservative utmost caution will have to be exercised in giving a trial to this scheme, which should be worked without much disturbing the existing agricultural economy of the village. For the people should not get scared of any such innovation; otherwise they would not take any interest in the scheme. If the scheme of co-operative farming succeeds it will have a very salutary effect upon the people here."



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APPENDIX

Minimum Wages Committee
(Agricultural Labour)
Madhya Bharat State



**A questionnaire for eliciting supplementary information
of a general nature regarding the condition of
agricultural workers in Madhya Bharat**

(i)

Q. 1. Please state the name of the district or districts of which you have personal knowledge on the above subject.

Q. 2. If you have any particular knowledge of any Tehsil or Tehsils in any district or districts please state their names.

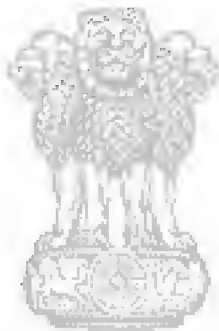


Q. 3. With how many families of landless agricultural workers have you been in personal contact ? And if so, give a brief description of their economic condition.

(ii)

Q. 4. What are the existing minimum and maximum rates of wages paid to landless agricultural workers, and to what extent do they vary seasonally ?

If the variations are prominent, state the minimum and the maximum rates of wages paid in a year.



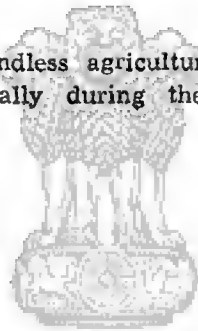
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Q. 5. Is it true to say that these rates of wages are showing a tendency to rise ?

(iii)

Q. 6. Does the supply of landless agricultural labourers exceed the relative demand ? If so, what is its effect on the general level of agricultural wages ?

Q. 7. Does the demand for landless agricultural labourers remain partially unsatisfied: (a) generally during the year; or (b) in different seasons ?

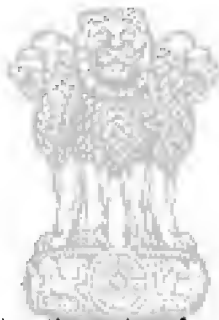


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Q. 8. What would you suggest for the purpose of withdrawing the excess supply of landless agricultural labourers referred to in question No. 6 ?

(iv)

- Q. 9. Do you think that the unsatisfied demand for landless agricultural labourers referred to in question No. 7, generally throughout the year or otherwise is due to unattractive rates of wages paid to them ?

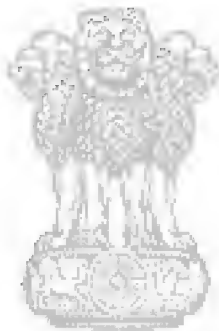


- Q. 10. If it is not due to unattractive rates of wages, would you recommend the provision of additional amenities, such as housing, medical assistance, educational facilities, etc. ?

(v)

- Q. 11. What are the vocations ordinarily followed by landless agricultural workers, who are unemployed: (a) either throughout the year; or (b) in different seasons ?

How does the under-employed labourer keep himself profitably occupied ?

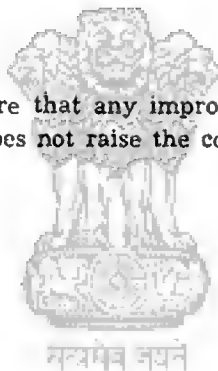


- Q. 12. If you support the establishment of economically feasible village industries, please give the nature of such industries and the assistance required from the Industries and/or Development Departments or Department,

(vi)

Q. 13. Do you think that his employability in the village economy or newly started cottage industries could be improved by imparting him training for a specialised job ?

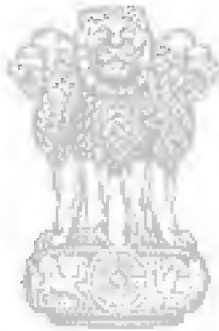
Q. 14. How would you ensure that any improvement of the general level of agricultural wages does not raise the cost of production of grain ?



Q. 15. Do you think that any increase in the general level of agricultural wages would adversely affect the total employment of landless workers; and if so, give your reasons ?

(vii)

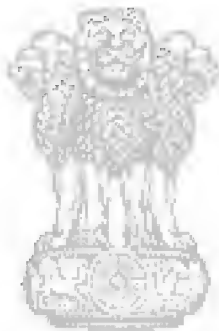
- Q. 16. Are you in favour of the establishment of co-operative farms developed at Government expense for the purpose of providing employment to landless agricultural labourers ? If so, what is the contribution which such labourers or the village collectively should themselves make ?



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- Q. 17. Would you desire a literacy drive being launched in your village to eradicate the general illiteracy and ignorance of villagers ?

- Q. 18. Can any schemes for the general improvement of the condition of landless labourers be entrusted to influential village workers? If your answer is in the affirmative, state the outline of your proposal. Could such surplus landless workers be employed on road construction, bridge-making and scheme of afforestation, in the villages, and if so, what initial equipment and recurring amenities should the State provide to them?

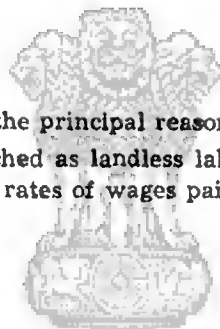


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Q. 19. What is the average percentage of landless agricultural workers who are indebted ?

Q. 20. Is such indebtedness the principal reason of—
(a) their being attached as landless labourers to a particular farm, or
(b) to the prevalent rates of wages paid to them ?



Q. 21. What concrete steps would you suggest for the eradication of indebtedness indicated above ?